

LETTERS
ON
PREJUDICE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

IN WHICH
THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES
OF
PREJUDICE IN RELIGION
ARE CONSIDERED :

WITH
AN APPLICATION TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

Though we wish heartily that all controversies were ended, as we do that all sin were abolished, yet we have little hope of the one or the other, till the world be ended. And in the meanwhile think it best to content ourselves with, and to persuade others unto, an *unity of charity and mutual toleration*; seeing God hath authorized no man, to force all men to *unity of opinion*. *Chillingworth.*

Let us not therefore, judge one another any more. *Romans, chap. 14. v. 13.*

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LETTERS ON PREJUDICE.

LETTER XVIII.

*ON THE INFLUENCE OF PREJUDICE AS CONNECTED
WITH THE GENERAL ESTIMATE OF THE PULPIT
DIVINITY OF THE LAST CENTURY.*

ENGLISH DIVINES.

A LOW ESTIMATE OF THE DIVINITY OF THE LAST AGE ONE OF THE PREJUDICES OF THE PRESENT. — ENQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF THIS PREJUDICE. — SOME PRINCIPLES OF JUDGMENT SUGGESTED. — OBJECTIONS MADE TO THESE DIVINES. — CHARACTER OF SCRIPTURE — DOGMATICAL AND PRECEPTIVE. — DIVINITY OF HUMAN COMPOSITION CONTROVERSIAL. — AND WHY. — GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE DIVINES UNDER CONSIDERATION. — FARTHER RULES FOR JUDGING THEM FAIRLY. — FAITH AND WORKS, WHY A SUBJECT OF CONTROVERSY. — THE LATTER STRONGLY ENFORCED, IN APPREHENSION OF ANTINOMIANISM. — FIRST WILL. SOMETIMES INCAUTIOUSLY STATED. — FARTHER OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED. — LOW STANDARD OF MORALITY. — USE OF HEATHEN AUTHORITIES. — A PRIORI REASONING. — CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO THIS LATTER PRACTICE, AND APPARENT NECESSITY FOR IT. — FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY, INDISPENSABLE IN THE PULPIT, THOUGH MODES OF ILLUSTRATION, MAY VARY.

I NEED hardly observe, my dear friend, that prejudice has often a powerful influence in forming the critical taste, even upon general

subjects ; and I should have thought that your knowledge of what we may call the history of theological literature, would have enabled you to trace this influence more particularly in studies connected with divinity. Your sweeping censure, therefore, of our divines of our last century, does, I own, surprise me ; and I feel strongly tempted to take up the gauntlet in their defence, or at least to urge a fair examination of the charge, and an enquiry, before you indiscriminately condemn them.

This is, indeed, one of the points to which I alluded in a former letter, as particularly connected with the prejudices of the present day ; and on which I had actually thrown together some observations, more general, perhaps, than would exactly suit the nature of your objections. Such as they are, however, you shall have them ; and if you can accompany me so far, we will continue the inquiry together ; not as contending partizans, but as Christian friends, in the honest pursuit of truth.

You must not be impatient of the few prefatory remarks, which are necessary, in my opinion, to the argument. Indeed much more might be said with advantage, than I have said, or can say. But if I can lead you fairly and patiently to look at *both* sides of the subject, and to trace the different schools of divinity to their historical origin, I think you will agree with me, that many pious Christians and true Churchmen, who are now unhappily jealous of each other, do not really differ so much as they suppose, and need not differ so much as they do.

You must, however, pursue this voyage of discovery, for yourself: I have neither time nor ability to do more than suggest a few leading points of direction; and even for this, I would gladly refer you to some better pilot, of whom you may find many, amongst your clerical or literary friends.

In the sublime and mysterious doctrines which are the subject of Divine Revelation, there is necessarily inherent a certain ob-

scurity ; not so much from the nature of the doctrines themselves, as from the imperfection of the human faculties, and the inadequacy of human language to the clear expression of ideas purely abstract and spiritual. This inadequacy, and the attempt minutely to explain what it has pleased the Spirit of God to assert without explanation, are the sources of much of the scepticism by which religion is discredited, on the one hand, and of the dogmatism by which it is disfigured, on the other ; — the former, divesting it of its sublimity and dignity, by subjecting its high and mysterious communications, to the lime and plummet of human reason ; the latter, destroying its symmetry and proportion, by exalting some doctrines, to the depreciation of others, or substituting the scholastic definition of a polemic, for the more simple and general proposition of an Evangelist or Apostle.

When we consider the various sects and opinions which have at different times arisen in the Christian world, — when we reflect upon the pertinacity with which each

party has adhered to its own system, as the standard of truth, and concluded all who dissented from it, to be in error, — we are almost tempted to suspect, that there must be some variation in the principles of the human understanding; and that the ideas of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, do not naturally present themselves in the same light, to all apprehensions. The fact, however, appears to be, (as I have observed in a former letter,) that many circumstances contribute to impress a bias, upon the mind, independent of the influence of abstract conviction; and that our perception of the evidence, or relative importance, of certain principles and opinions, depends, more than we are aware, upon our previous associations and impressions.

This cannot impugn the certainty of any doctrine that rests upon the testimony of Divine Revelation; but it may lead us to doubt the infallibility of our own judgment, and indeed, to question, whether any merely human interpretation of Scripture can be exclusively and universally true. It may

lead us to doubt, whether the views which our fellow Christians take of that Book to which they have equal access with ourselves, may not be aided as much by human intelligence, and influenced as much by Divine grace, as our own. It may lead us to doubt, whether those deep and difficult questions, which have divided the most pious Christians, in all ages of the Church, are capable of solution by any human understanding; and whether the obscure and imperfect intimations from which such discordant inferences have been drawn, are not rather intended to afford an opportunity for the exercise of the Christian grace of humility: — a grace, of which there is, perhaps, no exercise more difficult, than the submission of the understanding, to him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways, as well in humbly acquiescing in what he reveals, as in forbearing to intrude upon what he withholds.

‘The distrust of human authority, or the diffidence of individual judgment, which the above observations would suggest, can-

not bring into question, those fundamental truths which are built upon the express assertions of Scripture, and which it should seem, could only be denied by those who deny the authority upon which they are stated. The doctrines— of the fall and corruption of man, — of the atonement by our blessed Redeemer, — of the fullness and sufficiency of that atonement, for man's justification, — of the efficacy of faith, as the medium of that justification, and the necessity of Divine grace, to produce this principle of faith, — are so clearly and prominently revealed in Scripture, and, in fact, are so necessarily connected with each other, that it seems impossible to hold one link of this golden chain, without resting upon all the others, in succession. And I believe it will appear, that where these essential truths have been disputed, it has been found necessary to resort to arguments, which would sap the authority of all Revelation, and shake the foundations of all human knowledge. The exercise, therefore, of humility, with respect to the secret things that belong to the Lord our God, and of

charity, with respect to the opinions of our neighbour, may be perfectly compatible with the fullest conviction, and the most decided profession, of our own religious principles; and if we do not insist upon substituting our modification of the doctrines, for the doctrines themselves, we cannot be too explicit in the assertion, or too zealous in the defence, of them.

The memorable answer of Queen Elizabeth, when questioned respecting a point of her belief, though an evasion wrung from her by the peculiar difficulty of her situation, may suggest to us a rule of judgment in the study of the Divine Word, and a lesson of prudence and modesty in the choice of controversial language. Indeed one reason, amongst many others, why religious controversy is peculiarly irritating, seems to be the practice of substituting the language of the controversialist, for the scripture proposition he proposes to defend; and thus claiming, as it were, for his own interpretation, the deference due to the authority of Scripture itself. It is true that

the precise statement of ideas, and the application of human language, to condense and embody the leading principles of religion, are highly useful to impress those principles upon the mind; and the rather, as it appears, that we cannot clearly ascertain whether we comprehend the terms of any proposition, till we have, as it were, mentally translated those terms, into other language. But as such translation would not in other sciences, be admitted as a substitute for the original proposition, so neither ought it, in religion; where we maintain the Divine authority of the expression, as well as of the principle. It is, however, not only allowable, but necessary, where a Scripture doctrine is expressed by a periphrasis, or diffused through a chain of illustrations and examples, to use some concise and conventional terms, for the expression of our view of the doctrine, and for the test, if we may so call it, of the principles of those who dispute it.

It is an unhappy feature in the controversies of the present day, that these con-

cise definitions, whether derived from Scripture, from antiquity, or from more modern and familiar language, are oftener used as the watch-words of party, than as the instruments of truth. Not (God forbid we should suggest it!) from any deliberate intention to suppress or pervert the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, but from a certain jealousy of the right of private interpretation, which leads the controversialist on either side, to maintain the definition, in his own sense, while he disputes it, in that understood by his opponent, and combats a phantom of his own raising, in the assertion of principles which have not been questioned.

To this original, may, perhaps, be traced something of that jealousy which has lately been entertained by many pious and excellent persons, as if the great and leading truths of our religion, the doctrine of the atonement by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the promise of pardon to the penitent sinner, through faith in that atonement only, were virtually disclaimed, or excluded from

the Christian system, by all who would associate and combine with those doctrines, other principles, which they hold to be also integral parts of Christianity; principles acknowledged, indeed, to be deducible and inseparable from these doctrines, and which the Divine Author of Christianity, has not omitted to enforce, with all the minuteness of detail, and all the energy of authority, necessary in the instruction of a creature, so prone to forget his duties, and so averse to practise them.

It is not my intention, here, and it would be far beyond my ability, to attempt any general defence of what has been thus represented as an abuse of practical divinity, and a substitution of mere human ethicks for the high and peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. But if sufficient proof can be adduced, that in some instances, and perhaps in many, these high and peculiar doctrines form the admitted basis of moral instruction, and are only not prominently urged, because they do not appear to have been disputed, or sometimes, perhaps, escape

observation, from the practice of dividing the subject for the greater facility of application, surely it will not be an unimportant, nor an unacceptable service, to trace this foundation where it is apparent, and to endeavour to account for its occasional omission or obscurity.

To those who are conversant with theological writers, the observation will immediately occur, that a full and perfect system of Christian doctrine, is hardly to be found in any, however highly gifted, however deeply learned in the school of their Divine Master. Some favourite position is enforced, some embarrassing difficulty is eluded, some peculiar point of principle or of practice is pressed, to the temporary depreciation, or apparent exclusion, of others. This disadvantage, from which, perhaps, no uninspired writings are free, may be traced to various causes; sometimes to those which are personal, and connected with the early habits, studies, and prejudices, of the writers; more frequently, perhaps, to circumstances of local situation, and those sud-

den and capricious fluctuations of religious opinion, against which it may be their object to guard, and which, ever since the apostolic days, have led so many, to draw perverse and pernicious conclusions, even from the clearest Scriptural positions.

If we except some parts of the Apostolic Epistles, which have necessarily derived a controversial character, from the circumstances that produced them, and from the perversions of Christian doctrine, which they were respectively designed to correct, we shall observe one important and striking distinction, between the Bible, and almost all other books that treat of doctrinal religion. The former is *dogmatical*, (if I may be allowed the expression,) stating the sublime truths which it reveals, in simple, direct, authoritative, language, and claiming, in the name of its Divine Author, implicit belief, and unreserved obedience; bending to no superior authority; referring to no foreign or collateral testimony; temporizing with no

prejudice ; yielding to no passion ; compromising with no folly or foible of man ; designed for the instruction of all ages, and of the whole human race, and, therefore, like the Saviour whom it reveals, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ! But the doctrinal divinity of human composition, is almost universally, and, indeed, almost necessarily, controversial ; directed to the exposition, illustration, or defence, of the various truths of Revelation, and generally most diffuse, in the examination of such points, as ignorance has misunderstood, or malice and infidelity have misstated ; referring to the Scripture, on all hands, as the source and standard of truth, and urging singly and successively, those particular doctrines of Scripture, which appear for the time, liable to question or misapplication. This controversial character often gives a preponderance to the subject of present discussion, and might sometimes lead to a suspicion that it had an undue exaltation in the mind of the polemic ; but such an objection applies to the uninspired

advocate of *any* Scripture doctrine ; and is, in fact, no more than an assumption, that he does not believe, what his present circumstances and obligations do not lead him expressly to defend.

In asserting that works of doctrinal divinity are necessarily of a controversial cast, it will be obvious that I use the term, in a larger sense than it is commonly supposed to bear ; and it may not be amiss to state in a few words, the ground upon which I apply it.

Ever since the first promulgation of the Gospel, the efforts of its defenders have been stimulated by opposition, and the apologist, who maintained its evidence, against the incredulity of the Gentile, has found it necessary to vindicate its doctrines, against the perversions of the heretic. The zeal thus awakened, has been naturally applied to the points where danger has been most apprehended ; and the variations of error, have occasioned a corresponding variation of the posts and modes of defence. Hence have arisen, a minuteness of exposition, in the

discussion of some doctrines, and a partial enlargement, in the assertion of others, which seem to raise them for the time above their just proportion; and to throw into comparative inferiority, doctrines equally true and important, but which, not having been impugned, it does not appear at the moment necessary to vindicate. The objections, also, which are sometimes made against the abuse of a doctrine, are too often understood or represented, as urged against the doctrine itself; and a rejection of the principle, is imputed to those who would only resist the perversion. No allowance is made for the various shades and modifications which a doctrine may assume, to different apprehensions, nor for the possibility of stating with some verbal differences, propositions substantially the same. Thus, while the great work of general defence, has been prosecuted with energy and success, the jealousy of internal division, has gradually increased, and the Shibboleth of some party principle or phrase has been offered or required, as a criterion of orthodoxy. To these causes we may

trace the polemical character which I have ventured to attribute to such discourses; and to the local and peculiar circumstances of the writers, or to the actual state of religious opinions in their day, we might, probably refer, with success, for a clue to their choice of subjects, as well as to their comparative or individual views of doctrinal truths or practical cases.

If, from whatever cause, any doctrine has been elevated above its due proportion, or so expressed, as apparently to involve practical consequences injurious to morality, it is obviously the duty of the Christian teacher, to guard against these consequences, while he carefully maintains the truth of the doctrine itself. It is not, however, easy to calculate the difficulty of fully accomplishing this point, under the influence of prejudice on the one side, or suffering, perhaps, from its effects, upon the other; neither is it fair to draw a general inference from a partial investigation, and to argue that one necessary part of the subject is designedly overlooked or omitted, because we find another, equally

necessary, perhaps, pressed with peculiar urgency, when circumstances appear peculiarly to require its introduction.

It has been made a popular objection to much of our English divinity since the Restoration, that it has been in a great degree unchristianized, by the infusion of pagan or philosophical ethics, and divested of those high and holy peculiarities, which distinguish the religion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This charge, which seems to have been as hastily admitted as it has been peremptorily urged, has thrown into a temporary unpopularity, writers who were once considered as the pillars and ornaments of the English church, and who appear to have brought to its service, a fund of learning, and a patience of enquiry, — an extent of doctrinal information, — a force and variety of practical illustration and argument, — a fullness and comprehension of mind, — an acuteness of judgment, — a fluency of language, — a precision and accuracy of arrangement, — a power of becoming, as it were, all things to all men, and of com-

bating the sensualist and the sceptic, with their own weapons, (which the apostle himself does not seem to have despised,) — and an industry in the application of these various talents, — not always to be found in the more simple and summary productions of later times. If a spirit of metaphysical refinement, a fondness for classical allusion, an infusion of prejudices insensibly contracted from early habits and peculiar studies, from the nature of their education, and the state of religion and literature in their day, have given a shape and character to some of the compositions of these our “giants in theology,” too complex and systematic, if not too scientific, for the purpose of *general* Christian instruction, it will at least be confessed, that they have vindicated reason and philosophy, from the charge of being hostile to religion; and proved, that infidelity is to be traced to the defect, not to the superfluity, of knowledge.

The objections, however, which have been made indiscriminately, to these venerable writers, will apply, if I mistake not,

but partially. The high and peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, the only true foundation of Christian holiness, as well as of Christian hope, will appear to have been the ground work and platform of their teaching; and the “spoils of the Egyptians,” — the stores of classical, of philosophical, or of general learning, — will be found to have been occasionally employed, indeed, for the purposes of illustration or enforcement, of application or analogy, but not to have been urged as substitutes for Christian principle, or motives to Christian practice.

To enable us to form a fair and impartial estimate of the character and principles of any class or succession of writers, it is necessary to revert to the times in which they lived, to the societies in which they were conversant, to the peculiar, and local, and occasional circumstances, which may successively have directed their attention to the enforcement of any important truth, or to the refutation of any popular error; and it is necessary, *particularly*, in the study of theological writers, — whose works, when

not exclusively hortatory or practical, must take much of their form and character, from the occasions which produce them, and may, sometimes, seem to verge towards error on the one side, from an anxiety to combat error on the other.

To this cause at least, it appears, may be attributed the contrariety of opinion and vehemence of argument, with which the question of faith and works has been discussed, ever since the Reformation. If, in a just and natural reprobation of the presumptuous doctrine of human merit, our early Reformers stated fully and foreibly, the Scriptural truth of justification by faith only, it appears that some of their successors went still farther; and not only denied the efficacy of good works, as a title to justification, but disputed the moral quality of every action that man could perform, and stamped all his *doings*, by whatever motive suggested, with the seal of condemnation. Hence would naturally arise the presumption of Antinomianism, or the recklessness of despair; and in the anxiety to avert either of

those dreadful consequences, it was not improbable (and indeed in the heat and vehemence of controversy, it was hardly avoidable) that the duty of obedience to the law, might be magnified beyond its due proportion, and exalted from the rank of an evidence of faith, and a prescribed condition of final acceptance, to that of an efficient and meritorious cause of man's justification. It was obvious, on the other hand, that a fear of the presumption and self-dependance which such a view of the subject must excite, would alarm those, who feeling their own worthlessness, and utter insufficiency to do any good thing of themselves, clung to the faith of the Gospel, as their only hope and security, and threw themselves upon the all-sufficient sacrifice of their Saviour, not only as the ransom for their forfeited lives, but as the substitution for their covenanted duties. Hence would arise, and hence, in fact, did arise, a continued struggle between opposite opinions, expressed, perhaps, on both sides, with more heat than the sober judgment of the disputants would have suggested, and urging the

partizans or the opponents of each, to extremes which their leaders never contemplated.

Under this view of the subject, it seems not quite fair, to impute the suppression of a fundamental doctrine, where there only appears a desire to guard against the consequences which might result from the abuse of it ; or to attribute the assumption of a meritorious efficacy in human obedience, to those who would only contend for its indispensable necessity. Whether that necessity be founded upon the conditional nature of the Gospel promises, or urged as a test of Gospel privileges already communicated and received, — whether the doctrine of justification be admitted in its double sense, initial, and final,—or the one be united and identified with the other,—the sole meritorious efficacy must rest in the person and character of the Redeemer ; and the annexation of reward, whether to the faith, or the obedience, or both conjointly, of a creature whose *perfect* performances, supposing them possible, could con-

fer no claim to reward, and who is capable of no performance that is not tainted with the blemish of his radical corruption, must be an act of gratuitous and undeserved mercy.

In fact, the requisition of faith in Christ, as the indispensable preliminary of justification, renders this blessing as strictly conditional, as the demand of the fullest legal obedience could make it. The *principle* is equally established, *whatever* be the terms of the covenant; and the free grace of God is as clearly exhibited in the admission of sincere, though *wholly undeserving obedience*, made, through the merits of his blessed Son, and through faith in his blood, *not meritorious*, but *acceptable*, as through the *simple requisition of faith, producing obedience as its fruit*, and offering obedience as its evidence. Upon either hypothesis, free grace is the source, and faith is the instrument and condition, of justification; and whether salvation be affirmed to be contingent upon subsequent obedience, prompted, and invigorated, and sanctified by faith, or limited to the reception, by

faith only, of the saving doctrines of the Gospel, the *conditional* character of the covenant remains, as well as the natural inability of man to fulfil his part of it; and the utter worthlessness, not only of his works, but of his faith, as a title to pardon or reward, must be evident to every man who owns the corruption of his nature, and feels that he is neither able to believe nor to work, but through the promoting grace of God in Christ.

No principles, indeed, but those of irrelative election and absolute predestination, can annihilate the conditional nature of the Gospel covenant, or dissolve the connexion of man's moral responsibility, with all his spiritual hopes and privileges. Whether his free agency be admitted in a larger, or a more limited, sense, — whether it be inherent, or communicated, — whether the influence upon his will, be supposed to result from external motives, or internal impulses, — the statement is plain and explicit, that the Gospel sets before him, the choice of good or evil, and suspends his fate upon his de-

cision. It is, therefore, an important branch of the Christian teacher's office, not only to enforce generally, the practice of the moral duties, but to explain them in all their bearings and relations; and to urge them severally, and minutely, and earnestly, with every variety of argument and application that may touch the hearts, and influence the consciences, of those whom he addresses.

If the moral character of our actions, depends, as it is acknowledged that it does, upon the motive which suggests them, their religious character must be tried by the same criterion. The love of God must be the principle, the revealed will of God must be the rule, of the Christian's morality; and if the humble hope of a promised recompense be allowed to add its influence to the feeling of gratitude for benefits already received, the warmth of this feeling is not likely to be diminished, when we reflect, that this promised recompense, and the ability to seek or to obtain it, are equally the free

gift of God; equally beyond the natural reach of human hope and human effort, and attainable only through the merits and intercession of our blessed Redeemer. All moral teaching that has not this fundamental truth for its basis, is, indeed, but built upon the sand; and the omission of it, in the lessons of the Christian preacher, would be a dereliction of his most sacred duty, and an abandonment of the great object of his ministry.

But it does not necessarily follow that this leading principle is relinquished, when minor points of present or occasional urgency, are emphatically pressed, and the distinct branches of Christian doctrine or moral duty, are urged and enforced with minute and local application. It does not necessarily follow that the doctrine of a vicarious righteousness is omitted or impugned, when personal holiness is pressed, as well as faith, as the only medium through which that righteousness can be appropriated. General denunciations against "the

sinfulness of sin," will but little affect the consciences of those who claim an indulgence for their favourite transgressions, in their supposed exemption from other offences; an exemption, produced, perhaps, not by religious motives, but by habit and education, by the influence and example of respectable society, or by constitutional firmness or kindliness of temper. The principle of all sin, must not only be detected, the radical corruption of the human heart, must not only be pointed out, but every exhibition of its effects, in the positive infringement of God's holy laws, must be distinctly and minutely traced, and every individual sinner must behold his own face, in the faithful glass of the preacher. But so much of the character of pulpit compositions, must depend upon the times and circumstances which produce them, — so much that is local and occasional, must mix itself with the general exhortation of the preacher, — so appropriately must he suit his arguments and illustrations, to the character and comprehension of those whom he addresses, or to that particular branch of his

sacred subject which he undertakes to discuss, — that the principle of criticism, upon which he is to be tried, must vary with every variety of its application, and he must be judged, not by what it may be thought he could have done in a different age and situation, but by what he could have done, and by what he did actually accomplish, in his own.

If we would apply this criterion to the venerable writers in question, we must take into account, the religious character of their age, the controversies that disturbed, the vices that disgraced, the prejudices that biassed, the societies in which they lived. We must endeavour to trace the circumstances which influenced their choice of subjects, or decided their style and manner of treating them. We must distinguish those works which were designed exclusively, for the proof of some particular truth, or the refutation of some particular error ; and in which, nothing is to be reasonably expected, that is foreign to the direct and professed object. We must recollect, that much of

their general and discursive reasoning upon the evidences and first principles of religion, was necessary for the satisfaction and conviction of those, to whose understandings, the abstract truth of revelation must be proved, before its precepts can be enforced upon their consciences, or its promises applied to their hearts. We must recollect, that a different style of discussion was requisite to convince the metaphysical infidel, from that which would have been effectual to awaken the careless sinner, or to comfort the trembling penitent. We must remember, that every successive effort of opposition to the truth, required a variation in the mode of defence; and that a submission to the guidance of the divine word, and a conscientious conformity to its doctrines, might still be consistent with certain peculiarities, resulting from the characters, habits, or circumstances, of the writers. We must advert, also, to the fluctuation in the general use of language; and the different senses given at different times, to particular phrases; and we must especially

take into account, the circumstances which may make the enforcement of some single point of doctrine, more necessary at one time, than at another.

It is admitted, that the great and fundamental truths in question, should at all times be made the basis of religious instruction; and that the preaching, of which this is not the prominent object, cannot justly be styled the preaching of the Gospel. But the mode of explaining and illustrating these truths, is capable of such infinite variation, and is often so dependant on the various feelings and prejudices by which the preacher or the hearer may be supposed to be influenced, that a reader unacquainted with either, and entering upon the study of those writers, when their personal characters are unknown, and the controversies or prejudices of their days are forgotten, may very naturally form his judgment, without a reference to those guiding points, and estimate them by their bearing upon the controversies of his own day, and upon the prejudices of his own society.

Let it not, for a moment, be supposed, that I would suggest an apology for the slightest deviation from Gospel truth, or the suppression or modification of a single Gospel principle, to suit the prejudices of any period. I would only suggest, that every period has its prejudices, and that the extreme on the one side, has no more certainty of being right, than that upon the other. I would entreat the candid reader to enquire, whether some of those writings which have been so much decried, as inculcating a cold and heartless morality, destitute of power, of hope, and of life, do not explicitly assume the great truth of redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ, as the basis, his promises delivered in the gospel, as the sanction, and his precepts, as the rule, of their moral exhortations. I would entreat, that they may be tried by the general scope and tendency of their writings, not by the partial examination of detached portions or discourses, whose object might necessarily preclude any doctrinal peculiarity. I would suggest the danger and imprudence of identifying the zealous en-

forcement of morality, with the imputation of scepticism, or indifference upon the great truths of Revelation ; and I would venture to propose, as a fairer and safer principle of criticism, the test, of a general and preliminary assumption of gospel principles and sanctions, as the only true foundation of moral virtue, and, in fact, the only principles which can give a moral character to human actions.

Still, the acknowledgment must be made, whatever be the cause to which the fact may be imputed, that the Christian covenant has been more frequently preached by these writers, in its general and federal character, than in its direct and personal application ; and that an anxiety to impress the important truth of man's moral responsibility, and of the contingent nature of the gospel privileges, (so far, at least, as relates to their final fruition,) has given a lead and promineney to this part of the subject, which throws into comparative obscurity, the free grace, to which alone we must owe the acceptableness of our persons, and the

redemption, through which only, we must look for deliverance from the power and punishment of our sins. In urging the great truth, that moral exertion is necessary, and that, under God's assisting grace, it will be effectual, — in opposition to those who denied the utility, and even the lawfulness, of moral effort, and trusted for every thing to the omnipotence of grace, and the substitution of a vicarious righteousness, — it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently remembered, that while we are commanded to work out our own salvation, it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do. To this omission, wherever it occurs, the attention of the reader should certainly be directed, as tending to inculcate a dependence upon the sufficiency, if not upon the merit, of human obedience; but, still, a distinction should be made between the charge of deliberately setting aside the foundation, and that of encompassing, or even of overcharging the fabric, with extraneous or incongruous additions.

One of the charges, which, if not directly expressed, are at least deducible from the

criticisms to which I have adverted, is that of inculcating morality upon false principles, as to its nature, its object, and its effects; of estimating the quality of moral actions, by the standard of pagan or philosophical ethics; of urging them upon low and selfish views of personal interest and advantage; and of attributing to them an efficacy and importance in conferring a claim of actual worthiness on the performer, founded upon their supposed conformity with the abstract will of the Deity, and upon their tendency to promote the happiness of man.

It has been admitted, that peculiar habits and studies might lead to the infusion of certain prejudices in reasoning, or to a partiality for certain modes and topics of illustration: and perhaps it may be urged as a fair apology for these divines, if not a sufficient defence of them, that the indiscriminate rejection of human reason and learning, on the one hand, made it necessary to exhibit, on the other, the possible, and indeed the actual, consistency of their true

and legitimate use, with a submission to the supreme authority of Revelation.

Saint Paul himself, urges the great truth of the existence of God, as deducible from natural reason ; and our blessed Lord illustrates the doctrine of a particular providence, by the analogies of daily experience and personal feeling. In the general announcement of the divine message, all is simple, direct, and authoritative. In the illustration of particular propositions, reasoning is employed, local customs are referred to, inferences are drawn from premises which must be known and understood, before their bearing upon the subject can be perceived. We must carefully observe, however, the necessity of distinguishing the illustration, from the principle to be illustrated ; a precaution, to the neglect of which, may be attributed many of the present religious differences, and much of that jealousy of religious reasoning, which would banish from the Christian's library, the works of some of our most pious and valuable divines.

It is well observed by Bishop Horsley, in reply to those who would exclude learning from the list of ministerial qualifications, and quote the character of the apostles in support of their argument, that, so far from being destitute of this advantage, "the apostles were, in reality, the most learned of all preachers;" nay, "that they were not commissioned or allowed to preach, till they had been supernaturally instructed in all languages, and initiated into all knowledge." The operation of that divine Spirit which led them into infallible truth, was evidenced to their hearers, by a visible prodigy, as well as by the sudden and miraculous enlargement of their understandings; and their previous ignorance was, perhaps, necessary to give its full contrast and effect, to the blaze of their subsequent inspiration.

Another of the charges which have been advanced against this class of English divines, is that of trying the matter of the Bible, by their pre-conceived opinions, and substituting *à priori* demonstrations, drawn from their own notions of moral fitness or

rational probability, for the simple and authoritative statement of gospel doctrines. It should be remembered here, that trying the authority and evidence of these doctrines, by the test of their consonancy with human reason, is one thing; and simply proving their consonancy with human reason, is another. To the latter of these charges only, I apprehend that the authors in question are liable; and when we recollect the varieties of character which infidelity can assume, and advert to the subtle and sophistical arts which were used at this very period, to represent reason and revelation, as irreconcilable, it will, perhaps, appear questionable, whether any other mode of defence would have been so effectual.

Far from us be the presumption, of vindicating the application of human reason, to the investigation of those deep and mysterious doctrines which seem to have been revealed chiefly for the exercise of our faith, and the trial of our humility! Far from us be the blasphemous impiety, of supposing that the express communications of the Al-

mighty, are to stand or fall with our comprehension of them! The genuineness of these communications, may, indeed, be tried upon the ground of external evidence; but if they constitute a portion of God's authenticated record to mankind, their very superiority to the grasp of the human intellect, may, perhaps, be urged as an additional proof of their divine original. It should also be observed, that it is not so much to the abstract truth of the doctrines, as to the investigation of their true Scriptural sense, that the test of human reasoning is commonly applied; and so long as we do not acknowledge an infallible guide, independent of the Scriptures, in matters of faith, this test must be used as the instrument of our enquiries. — Nay, the very submission of the understanding, to the mysteriousness of the divine communications, must be the result of a conviction in the understanding, that the nature of the Deity is far above our ken; that his ways cannot be as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.

Another point, to which I have already adverted, and which it is necessary to keep particularly in our view, is the distinction of character and object, in the various works to which this objection is made. It will hardly be disputed, that a different line of argument and illustration is necessary for the conviction of the philosophical infidel, from that which would be suited to the habits and comprehension of the simple and illiterate peasant. The fundamental principles may be the same in both cases; the truth, as it is in Jesus, may be enforced with equal energy and sincerity; but previous impressions and prejudices are to be combated in the one case, which do not exist in the other; and the style of address is, in each, to be adapted to the character and apprehension of the hearers.

It is observed by one of the Moravian Missionaries, in his account of his first visit to the Greenlanders, that the difficulties of their conversion, were greatly increased by the defects of their language, which afforded no terms for the expression of spiritual

ideas. This is a disadvantage which must always occur, where civilization is still in its infancy, and the mind of man is too much engaged with personal and palpable necessities, to have leisure for the formation of abstract and general ideas. Accordingly, we find, in the addresses to these people, the Christian religion divested of much of its spirituality, and received, at least, if not intentionally communicated, rather through the medium of the senses and imagination, than of the understanding. In concentrating the system to the two great points of original sin, and redemption by Christ, an appeal is made to the irresistible evidence of personal feeling, and to the strong principle of personal interest ; and it is obvious, that upon these two points, must be founded the practical conviction and moral influence of Christianity. Where the deep and familiar experience of personal corruption and necessity, is once impressed, the offer of redemption will be thankfully accepted, without dispute or discussion ; and the question, "What must we do to be saved ?" will alone meet the ear of the

minister of the gospel. But the proof of transgression, can only be established upon the evidence of the law transgressed ; and the obligation of submission to the law, must rest upon the existence and authority of the Law-giver. These fundamental principles of natural, or, as I would rather say, of patriarchal religion, are assumed by our blessed Lord and his apostles, in their teaching, without explanation or proof ; not as it appears, because proof and explanation were unnecessary, but because these truths, upon express revelation, were the basis of religion amongst the people whom they taught. Where the pride of philosophy, or the darkness of polytheism, had perverted or obscured these fundamental principles, we find them expressly stated and enforced ; and the whole chain of spiritual truths, traced in their strict and logical concatenation ; — briefly and authoritatively, indeed, as was natural, where the arguments of reason were enforced by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power ; but clearly enough, to prove that the apostle considered the exercise of reason as lawful and necessary.

though he deprecated its presumptuous abuse.

If the paucity of ideas, and the deficiency of language, appear to have been, in some cases, an obstruction to the communication of spiritual truths, the opposite extreme of metaphysical refinement and scholastic accuracy, presents a character still more discouraging, and, perhaps, (humanly speaking, at least,) impervious to any impressions that are not conveyed through the favourite channel of intellectual discussion. I would not vindicate such a state of mind, nor propose, as a general model, the style of composition which was necessary to meet it ; but I would account, upon this ground, for the occasional use of a style more abstract and metaphysical, than was, perhaps, suited to mixed or unlettered congregations ; and I would urge the prudence, as well as the fairness, of distinguishing the substance of the communication, from any peculiarity with which it is expressed, or any extraneous matter by which it is illustrated.

But such objections, and many others, which it would too heavily tax your time and patience, to detail, cannot fairly do more than bring into question, the present utility of these writers, and limit the efficacy of their teaching, to the times and circumstances which produced it. Yet, if it be remembered, that characters like those which they exposed, are still existing amongst us, — that errors like those which they refuted, are still maintained and pressed with unyielding pertinacity, — that the infidelity against which they argued, is triumphing in the confidence of that capricious fashion which has thrown them into a temporary obscurity, and urging again and again, objections which have been again and again refuted, — if it be remembered, that, in this particular, the state of the religious world is still, very nearly, what it was in their day, it will not, surely, be denied, by those who most earnestly contend for a different style of theology, that great and important advantage may, even now, be derived from the study of these venerable divines.

If the objections to which I have adverted, were always founded upon direct examination and comparison of these writers, with those of what is called a more evangelical character, and upon a fair collation of both with the standard of Scripture and of the Church, it were unquestionably right to exclude them from the course of Christian study, unless for the purpose of marking the aberrations to which the presumption of the human understanding is liable. But if it appear that such objections (their justice, now, is not the question,) are sometimes taken upon trust, and that much of the clamour against this class of theologians, is heard amongst persons who do not even profess to have consulted their works, and adopted, implicitly, upon the testimony of others,—surely, it is fair to urge an investigation of the ground of such testimony, or a suspension of judgment upon the merits of the case: surely, it is fair to urge, that writers to whom the cause of general Christianity is, confessedly, so highly indebted, should not, now, be condemned unheard, or charged with perverting or abandoning

the fundamental articles of their faith, because they may have been led, by the exigencies of their day, to enlarge upon circumstantial, or by the character of their audience, to adopt certain modes and topics of illustration. The question, indeed, whether they do preach "Christ crucified," is indispensable to ascertain their merit as Christian teachers, and their title to the confidence of the Christian reader. But this question is to be decided by the inquiry, not whether they teach this fundamental truth, in the language of this or that class of religionists; not whether they build on it, or connect with it, other doctrines of which it may be independent; but whether they lay it, or adopt it, as the foundation of their whole scheme of instruction, as the principle of every duty which they urge, as the source of every hope which they suggest, as the grand and vital point to which all others are but instrumental and collateral? whether they build upon this truth as upon an admitted basis; and whether their not, at all times, expressly stating and enforcing it, does not appear to have

proceeded from a conviction, that it was already fixed in the apprehension of their hearers ?

So far, my dear friend, had I already proceeded in the anticipation of some of your objections, and in reference to those which I have heard from others. It would lead to a discussion beyond our present purpose, to enter very minutely into the examination of this question, though its importance fairly entitles it to our attention. It may, however, furnish you with an excitement to pursue the subject, and a proof of the necessity of the distinctions which I have suggested, if I devote a few of our future hours to the consideration of some of the works which have been made obnoxious to this species of criticism, and endeavour to trace the origin of what I have here ventured to denominate a prejudice. I do it with a full conviction of the difficulty and delicacy of the task, and a wish that it had fallen into abler hands ; but still, under an impression, that if the cause of true religion can be served, and the duties of can-

dour and charity enforced, even by the weakest and most obscure individual, the hewers of wood and drawers of water are as much bound to contribute their services, as those who are "filled with wisdom of heart for the cunning work of the temple."

LETTER XIX.

PREFATORY SKETCHES.

STATE OF THE CHURCH IMMEDIATELY PREVIOUS TO THE REFORMATION. — POPISH DOCTRINE OF MERIT. — THE GREAT OBJECT OF LUTHER'S OPPOSITION. — JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. — STRONG STATEMENT OF IT BY LUTHER. — OBJECTED TO AS DEROGATING FROM THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS. — EXPLAINED AND GUARDED BY OTHER REFORMERS. — CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION. — ABUSES OF IT. — FREE WILL. — ORIGINAL SIN. — DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON THESE POINTS, NO BAR TO COMMUNION AMONGST THE EARLY PROTESTANTS. — SEPARATED BY OTHER DISTINCTIONS. — CONTROVERSIAL HABITS OF THE PROTESTANT DIVINES, INFLUENCES THE STYLE OF THEIR THEOLOGY. — TWO GREAT PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION. — STRONG STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN; ABUSE OF IT. — CASUAL ASSOCIATION OF THIS DOCTRINE WITH CALVINISM. — CONSEQUENT JEALOUSY ENTERTAINED OF IT, AND MODIFIED PROPOSITION OF IT BY SOME DIVINES. — ENGLISH REFORMATION: LITTLE ADVANCED IN DOCTRINE DURING THE REIGN OF HENRY VIII. — CRANMER'S EXERTIONS. — EARLY PROTESTANT PUBLICATIONS. — GENERAL MEANING OF THE PHRASE "GOOD WORKS" AT THIS PERIOD; AND CAUSE OF THE DEPRECIATORY LANGUAGE APPLIED TO THEM. — THIS DISTINCTION AFTERWARDS FORGOTTEN; CONSEQUENT ABUSES. — INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHURCH AND FREE USE OF THE BIBLE, THE TWO GREAT POINTS GAINED AT THIS TIME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To account for, what you consider as the deterioration of evangelical doctrine, com-

mencing just at the period you mention, we must take up the subject a little earlier, and cast a glance back upon the history of the first Reformers.

Under the government of the Romish Church, and when literature was chiefly confined to the monastic or ecclesiastical orders, any free disquisition, either upon the principles, or the abuses of religion, was forbidden by interest, as well by authority; and whatever private or speculative infidelity may have existed in the minds of individuals, the strong arm of the Church so effectually repressed any public expression of it, that the first reformers had no errors of this kind to oppose.

It is true, that the subtle philosophy of the schools, tended strongly to undermine the principles, as well as to corrupt the doctrines of religion; and the indiscriminate admiration of antiquity, which had followed the revival of Grecian learning, in the century preceding the Reformation, had introduced a disputatious and theorizing spirit,

and established a fanciful distinction between the provinces of philosophy and theology, which, at a later period, exhibited them in open and hostile contrast. The wretched subterfuge of distinguishing between philosophical and theological truth, had been used as a shield against ecclesiastical severity; and an implicit submission to every dogma of the Church, had been gravely professed, by those whose principles undermined the foundations even of natural religion.

But this distinction had probably been sometimes adopted with more sincerity and less reflection. The partiality of early impression, had preserved, in many minds, a considerable portion of religious feeling; while the separation of faith and morality, by the commutative system of the Church, (I mean the power of absolution and indulgences,) had led to an acquiescence in her speculative tenets, which imposed little more than a nominal restraint upon the conduct of her members. Hence, I conceive, that infidelity, strictly speaking, was

far from being general, even amongst literary characters; and I think, this is proved by the very large and early accession of such characters, to the ranks of the reformation. The great body of the people, every where, highly prized the comforts, however they may have neglected the obligations of religion; and their miserable resources of supererogatory works of mediation and atonement, proved, at once, their deep consciousness of natural guilt, and their sense of personal incapacity to offer any adequate satisfaction to the divine justice. Accordingly, when Luther and his venerable companions revived the precious and fundamental doctrines of "one God, and one Mediator," it might have been said of them, as it was of their divine Master, "the common people heard them gladly." The natural hostility in their minds, to these blessed principles of Scriptural truth, was conquered by their experience of the inefficiency of every other dependence for peace and tranquillity of conscience; and the futility of such dependence, was still farther proved by the miserable end of some of

their spiritual physicians, whom an obstinate rationality, (as Dr. Johnson would have called it,) prevented from applying to their own wounds, the spurious balm which they had so lavishly dispensed to others.

In the opposition to the doctrine of indulgences, with which Luther commenced his warfare against the Roman Church, the first object was to overthrow the opinion of human merit, upon which that doctrine was built; and to place Christian hope on its only true foundation, a dependence upon the all-sufficient merits of Christ. Whatever shades of difference may have appeared in their explication of this great truth, it was the common principle of all the Reformers, and, therefore, may be regarded as the Catholic doctrine of the Reformation. It is, however, acknowledged, that an early advantage was taken of Luther's vehement and unqualified proposition of it, by the Romanists, on the one hand, to represent this doctrine as subversive of the obligations of morality, and by the fanatics, on the

other, to decry all obedience to the moral law, as inconsistent with Christian liberty.

Observing that Luther carried this doctrine of justification by faith, to such a length, as seemed, though certainly contrary to his intention, to derogate not only from the necessity of good works as a prescribed condition of Salvation, but from their obligation and importance as essential to the Christian character, some of his fellow labourers endeavoured to qualify the strength of his expressions; and though his vehement temper and high authority restrained the freedom of controversy amongst the Protestants, during his life, the discussion was afterwards pursued with great warmth, and the different opinions maintained with a mutual and growing exaggeration, which mutually led to a complete separation of principle between the parties.

This separation was still widened by the controversy concerning the doctrine of pre-

destination and personal election, as taught by Calvin and his disciples ; which, though it originated in a different quarter, soon became general and interesting, from the zeal and eminent character of some of its advocates. This doctrine, though strenuously opposed by the writers of the Lutheran school, was represented by other divines of high reputation and piety, as inseparably connected with the fundamental truths of men's utter demerit and the free grace of God ; and the purposes of mercy towards the favoured few, who were from eternity the subjects of the divine election, were supposed to be accomplished by an irresistible impression upon the will, in which the creature was absolutely passive and powerless. The doctrine of a conditional decree, which seemed to reconcile the foreknowledge of the Deity, with his moral attributes, while it confirmed the retributive principle of the Gospel, was represented as irreconcilable with the immutability of his providential dispensations ; and though the Salvation of the elect, was acknowledged to be affected through their sanctification, all

human power of co-operation in the process, was expressly disclaimed.

If the doctrine of justification by faith, as taught by Luther, had been found liable to Antinomian perversion, it seemed likely to lead, under this latter modification, to false security and spiritual pride, if not, sometimes, to a desperate indulgence in sin, under the plea of necessity.

The power of free agency, is so necessarily connected with the moral character of human actions, that many of the writers who have most strenuously asserted the natural subjection of the will, to evil, have acknowledged a certain communicated liberty of thought and of action. Others have supposed the depravity to consist, rather in imbecility, and an indisposition of the mind to holiness, than in an actual enslavement to sin; and have allowed more natural capacity for the rectification of the will, and the consequent regulation of the conduct, than seems to be warranted either by Scripture or experience. The former of

these opinions appears to coincide most nearly, with the doctrine of our Church, upon this article.

Though a difference of judgment upon these deep and difficult questions, did not operate as a barrier to Christian communion between the reformed Churches, it influenced the general character of their theology, and gradually led each party to establish its own view, as a key to the solution of the Scripture mysteries. Hence would arise a partiality on the one hand, and a prejudice on the other, equally likely to warp the simple and straight forward pursuit of Scripture truth: not from any corrupt or intentional perversion in either, but from a natural propensity to magnify the importance of the principles which they had severally espoused, and to strengthen them by an alliance with other Gospel doctrines, undisputed by any party.

With these prejudices, were gradually associated distinctions upon other points, which marked a broader line of separation ;

and as they related to the external polity of the Church, or to the administration of divine worship, established a visible, and, if you will allow me the expression, a material, standard, to fix the choice, or the judgments, of those who were insensible or indifferent to the subtilties of metaphysical controversy. The humbler adherents of these several societies, adopted the speculative principles of their leaders; and the continental Churches, with very few exceptions, seem to have yielded an implicit submission to the judgment of their respective founders.

While their growing experience in the interpretation of Scripture, led those great men and their successors, to a gradual improvement of their several schemes of doctrine, and a closer assimilation in various particulars, to the standard of divine truth, the controversial habits in which they had been trained by their long warfare with the Romish Church, gave a polemical character to their theology, which their recent and imperfect acquaintance with the principles

of religious liberty, confirmed ; and which sometimes appears to have led them to assert as articles of faith, what might have been better defended as points of opinion,—or, in the investigation of truths of undisputed authority, to urge their peculiar interpretations, as the decision and irrefragable statement of Scripture itself.

Thus we see the great body of Protestants formed into distinct societies, and though connected by the two leading principles which they held in common, and agreed to maintain, as the fundamentals of religion, (viz. the sufficiency of the Bible as a rule of faith, and the doctrine of justification by the merits of Christ alone,) we find them differing upon various other principles both of discipline and doctrine, and framing their systems of speculative theology, with a view to the support of the general scheme which each particular Church had adopted.

As a dependence upon human merit, had been the great stumbling block of the

Church of Rome, the strong and humiliating language which was used by the Reformers, to counteract this dependence, was understood, and, indeed, was generally applied, rather absolutely than relatively; and gave rise to an indiscriminate depreciation of man's moral faculties, and an assimilation of the human character, to the diabolical, not only revolting to the pride of unregenerated nature, but apparently inconsistent with the evidence of history and of experience.

But much of this inconsistency would be removed by that more precise and cautious statement of the doctrine, which distinguishes religious, from social or constitutional virtue; and places the moral character of human actions, exclusively in their principle and intention. May I venture to observe, my friend, that the *principle* of religion, seems sometimes to have existed where there was little remnant of a genuine revelation; and that a reference to this principle, may be traced in much of the Pagan or popular virtue of antiquity? Indeed, the

effects which the public abandonment of it, produced upon the morals of a great nation, within our recollection, and which a contempt of it, is still daily producing amongst our own untaught and infatuated people, show that this statement of human depravity can hardly be charged with much exaggeration.

The apprehension, however, that the divine justice and benevolence were impeached by the proposition of a doctrine so humiliating, and the advantage that was taken of it, by the enemies of religion, to inculcate the principles of an atheistical fatalism, soon produced a modification of the strength of these expressions, and gave rise to a controversy within the Reformed church, which gradually led to an identification of this doctrine, with the peculiarities of the Calvinistic scheme, and a consequent rejection of it (in this strong statement at least,) by those divines who denied the doctrine of absolute predestination.

And here, my dear friend, we find (as I imagine,) the foundation of that jealousy

with which many of our controversialists view this strong statement of the doctrine of original corruption, and the absolute self-renunciation which it involves. I may observe also, that as a certain degree of exaggeration, (not in the principle, for that was equally acknowledged, but) in the proposition and application of this doctrine, has generally distinguished the Calvinistic divines, and a charge of Pelagianism or popery has been urged against those who preach it in its more guarded and modified form, the apprehension of these latter errors, has led in some instances to the opposite extreme, and produced a similar exaggeration of statement, upon this point, in some preachers who reject the peculiar tenets of Calvinism. To those who are unversed in the distinctions of controversy, the prominent resemblance only, is observable; and all who bear it, are included under the same denomination.

Remember, that I offer these slight observations, merely as historical or conjectural hints, and by no means presume to enter dogmatically into deep and intricate ques-

tions of doctrine. Indeed, the Calvinistic controversy particularly appears to me, to be one of those in which the enquirer may be “ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth;” and therefore, when I find the opinions of the best and wisest Christians, divided, upon these high and mysterious doctrines, I rather endeavour to turn my attention from their points of difference, to their points of agreement, and to follow them, as they have followed Christ, in their united acknowledgment of catholic and fundamental principles.

In pursuing an historical investigation, however, and endeavouring to trace the causes which have led to an arbitrary association of principles not necessarily connected, a tone of decision must sometimes be assumed, which may be very far from the real judgment of the enquirer; or a doubt of the disputed opinion may be inferred from the freedom with which its foundations are examined. I mean not here to withhold, or to apologize for, the confession, that I cannot adopt the Calvin-

istic view of predestination ; but I would apologize for any apparent peremptoriness of judgment upon it, into which its connection with our more immediate subject, may lead me.

Let us now turn our view homewards, and endeavour to trace, the origin of those associations, in our own theology, which have divided us amongst ourselves, and tinged with an infusion of polemical jealousy, the truly charitable and comprehensive spirit of our Church. I cannot indeed discuss, in a few short letters, a subject that would occupy many volumes ; neither am I qualified for a full investigation of the literary and political history connected with it. I shall, therefore, only venture on a few observations, illustrative of the general principle upon which I would establish the defence, or the apology, of the class of Divines to whom your censure is applied.

You cannot have failed to observe, that in England, the change of the legal ecclesiastical constitution, preceded by some years,

the reformation of the national faith. The king's assumption of the supreme spiritual authority within his own dominions, was his only act of dissent from the established religion ; which he had defended with the pen of controversy, as well as with the sword of persecution, and whose most superstitious and erroneous doctrines he still pertinaciously retained and enforced. His zeal for the tenets which he had maintained in public disputation, and his jealousy of the rights of his ecclesiastical supremacy, united with his high and vehement character, to restrain the exercise of liberty of conscience, and to obstruct the progress of the Reformation ; while his personal attachment to the excellent Cranmer, counteracted in many instances his habitual severity, and gave to the infant Church, some intervals of peace and protection, which the zeal and prudence of that venerable Reformer, did not fail to improve.

It is a most curious and improving contemplation, to trace the variation, in the order of events by which the divine wisdom

has accomplished in different places, the great work of religious reform ; and this is, perhaps, no where more observable, than in the slow, and apparently casual, process of this work, in our own country ; and in the preparation for it, by that bold assertion of religious independence, on the part of the sovereign, which was here the precursor, as in the continental governments, it was the result, of general reformation.

In the gradual removal of various practical abuses, and the introduction of the English Bible, into general and familiar use, Henry the Eighth laid the foundation of a farther and more effectual reform ; but his zeal for those tenets of the Romish Church, to which he had pledged himself by a public and controversial avowal, and which vanity, if not principle, would lead him to maintain, combined with his arbitrary and capricious temper, and his jealousy of the high ecclesiastical prerogative which he had recently assumed, to restrain all public freedom of religious enquiry, and to establish a spiritual tyranny, differing from the former, only in

Though, even of Henry, it were uncharitable to say that principle had no share in his proceedings, we must trace much of the Reformation of this period, to the happy combination of events which placed our eminent reformers, so high in his counsels and confidence, and through his attachment to their persons, secured his toleration of their opinions, when they did not directly contradict his own. In the successive modifications of the national creed, put forth by authority at different periods, we have some curious instances of his fluctuation between the old and the new opinions; and in the "Necessary Erudition of a Christian Man," compiled by the bishops, approved by the parliament, and finally corrected and published by the king, and which seems to have fixed the standard of divinity till the close of this reign, we have the foundation of a more complete reform, though still encumbered with some of those errors, which early prejudice had so familiarized and endeared, that the light of divine truth expelled them but slowly, even

from the minds of the wisest and most pious Reformers.

In this remarkable treatise, as abridged by Burnet, Neal, and other historians, (for I have never seen the book itself,) the doctrine of justification by the merits of Christ alone, is expressly asserted; though there is much introduced into the explanation of it, which was discarded at the subsequent compilation of the Articles; and Cranmer's judgment upon it, which, even at this period, seems quite in accordance with the latter, is quoted by bishop Burnet, in some extracts from his private papers. Great care, however, is taken to guard this doctrine, from any connexion with that of special predestination; on which no dogmatical opinion is expressed, and which seems to have been treated by our Reformers as a question too deep and mysterious for human decision.

As the adherents to the popish party were still prevalent within the Church, the

established doctrine of the sacraments was confirmed in this publication; Cranmer only being desirous of reducing their number. It appears, however, that he still persevered in his belief of the corporeal presence; and some years subsequent to this period, he confesses, of himself, that he was "scarcely yet, thoroughly persuaded in the right knowledge of the sacrament, or, at least, not yet fully ripened in the same;" though shortly after (in the reign of Edward the Sixth,) being confirmed by conference with bishop Ridley, and profited in riper knowledge, he took upon him the defence of the whole doctrine.

If we are inclined to wonder that a mind so wise and pious, should have so long adhered to an error which appears to us, so manifestly absurd, we may learn from this instance, as well as from the very gradual progress of the Reformation, upon other doctrinal points, a lesson of caution and humility; and if the growing light of religious truth, and the free circulation of the divine word, have enabled us to see more clearly,

though we may find ample cause of thankfulness, in our more favourable position for the attainment of knowledge, we have surely no ground to presume upon our individual sufficiency for the peremptory decision of "controversies of faith."

It is not within our purpose, to follow the Reformation, through all the intricacies of its controversy with the Church of Rome; nor to trace, minutely, the practical and political, nor even all the doctrinal, errors and abuses, against which the zeal of the Reformers was directed; but simply to account for the prominence, in our early theology, of the great protestant doctrine of justification by faith, and the apparent neglect of guard and limitation, with which it is sometimes stated.

In considering much of the depreciatory language which, at the period in question, was applied to "good works," we must recollect that this name was given; in the language of the times, and particularly by the writers of the Romish Church, em-

phatically, if not, exclusively, to those works of superstition, or of supererogation, which were supposed to indicate, or to confer, a peculiar sanctity of character, and to invest the doer, with a personal and meritorious claim to the divine approbation.

Of "good works," as thus understood, not only was the merit disclaimed by the Reformers, but their necessity was denied, and even their lawfulness disputed. Yet a strict conformity to the moral and evangelical law, or, as it was called, a true evangelical obedience, though not admitted as a claim of right upon the remunerative justice of God, was required as the indispensable fruit, and test, and evidence, of justifying faith. At a later period, when, whether from inadvertence or ill intention, this peculiar application of the phrase, "good works," was either forgotten or unnoticed, the simple and exclusive requisition of faith, as a condition of justification, was represented, as designed, or calculated, to afford a refuge and an apology for sin; and the perversion of those who abused the

doctrine, unhappily laid it open to much of the severity of those who impugned it.

On the whole, the doctrinal divinity of this period, appears to have been dogmatical, in its reference to Scripture, and controversial, in its application to the errors of a particular Church; and this character it retained, till the extension of the Reformation, and the subdivision of the protestants, upon other points, introduced new topics of polemical discussion.

But the reign of Henry the Eighth, strictly speaking, was no more than a foundation and preparative for the Reformation. That prince, himself, appears to have lived and died in many of the grossest errors of his early faith; and when the stimulus of his ambition, his rapacity, or caprice, did not urge him to some new resistance of the authority, or opposition to the principles, of the Church, his prejudices appear to have been favourable to all those doctrinal corruptions which the Reformers laboured to overthrow. During the latter years of his

reign, the progress and retrogression of religion, were alternate, as his capricious and disputatious temper inclined him to the support of the respective systems; and as the impulses of passion, or the views of personal interest, led him to oppose, or to promote, the Reformation, in his dominions.

Two points, however, were secured at this period, to which the rapid progress and firm establishment of evangelical truth, in the following reign, are chiefly to be attributed, — the independence of the national Church, and the free circulation of the Scriptures, in the national language. By the former, the exertions for a more effectual reformation, were at once released from the controul of foreign authority; and by the latter, a doubt was awakened, as to the ground of many doctrines and practices which had been enforced by the Church of Rome, as indispensable points of faith and duty.

I ought again to apologize for my digressions; or, rather, for my diffuseness upon

a part of our history which seems to have little direct connexion with the subject of your observations. You find here, however, as I apprehend, the first rude outline of the doctrinal character by which the theology of a subsequent period, was distinguished ; and which I will endeavour to trace more particularly, in my next letter. Meantime, fare you well, my dear friend ! and let us both be careful to remember that controversy is not religion ; and that no attention to doctrinal accuracy can atone for the breach of charity, or supply the deficiency of practical obedience.

Ever yours, faithfully.

LETTER XX.

PREFATORY SKETCHES—continued.

ADVANCEMENT OF THE REFORMATION UNDER EDWARD VI.
 PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT.—
 DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND. — EARLY DIFFERENCES AMONGST THE REFORMERS, CONFINED TO HABITS AND CEREMONIES. — ABUSE OF THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION, MENTIONED BY BISHOP BURNET. — RISE OF THE DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES. — CATHOLIC DOCTRINES OF THE REFORMATION, STILL UNANIMOUSLY MAINTAINED. — REIGN OF ELIZABETH. — RISE OF THE SUBSEQUENT CONTROVERSIES. — MUTUAL INTOLERANCE OF THIS PERIOD. — ATTACKS ON THE HIERARCHY. — CARTWRIGHT. — FIELD'S CONFESSION. — LOYAL PRINCIPLES THERE STATED. — PROBABLE OCCASION OF THIS DECLARATION. — BROWNISTS — OR INDEPENDENTS. — GROWING IRRITATION AND FINAL BREACH BETWEEN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE PURITANS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are interested in my little sketches, and encourages me to pursue them without farther preface or apology. I will try, however, not to fatigue you with their length, and to

confine them, strictly, to such points as bear upon the principle which I am anxious to establish.

When the Reformers of our Church were emancipated from the control of Henry's capricious temper and arbitrary government, they proceeded with new energy, to finish the glorious work, of which, in his reign, they had only laid the foundations. With a single eye to the establishment of truth, and advancing (it appears,) as their own Scriptural light extended, they gradually removed every real abuse, while they cautiously avoided all unnecessary innovation; and, regulating their faith, by the Bible, and their discipline, by the pattern of the primitive Church, they endeavoured to frame a scheme of national doctrine, so comprehensive, and yet so precise, as should exclude none, for minute discrepancies of opinion, who held the fundamental truths of Christianity, while it should strictly bar the entrance of the Church, against all who perverted, or who denied those truths.

It appears that our Reformers did not symbolize, strictly, in doctrine with any of the continental Churches, though they seem to have occasionally corresponded with all; and the changes in religion, being accomplished, not merely with the consent, but with the zealous co-operation of the civil government, our Church was happily spared the violent disruption of all ties of ecclesiastical discipline and subordination, which necessarily followed the Reformation, in those countries, whose governments continued attached to the interests of the Church of Rome.

What was at first a measure of necessity, however, soon became a measure of choice, from prejudice or principle, with some of the reformed Churches; and a doubt of the lawfulness of episcopal government, succeeded to their resentment of its abuses. I think bishop Hall observes, that Calvin himself would have been an episcopalian, if the bishop of Geneva had adopted the protestant principles, and become the protector of the infant Church; and I cannot

but believe that much of Knox's inveterate opposition to episcopacy in his own country, may be traced to the resistance made by the Scottish bishops, to the Reformation.

In England, however, no difference of opinion upon this point, seems yet to have existed amongst the Reformers; and the established form of Church government, (with the simple exclusion of foreign interference,) appears to have been retained, not merely as expedient, but as consonant to primitive usage and apostolic institution.

In the compilation of our doctrinal Articles, two objects appear to have been held in view; comprehension, on the one side, and exclusion on the other; — the provision of an effectual security against popery, which was the object of universal detestation and alarm; and of an allowance for those minor discrepancies of opinion upon some abstract and speculative points, which might distinguish, without dividing, the members of a protestant Church. The very disputation upon the meaning of our

Articles, is a proof of the skill with which this latter object was accomplished; and of the prudence and truly Christian humility of those excellent men, who, mutually sacrificing system to peace, and presuming not to be wise above what is written, ventured no farther on these mysterious questions, (as one of their number beautifully said,) than the Scripture did, as it were, lead them by the hand.

But the great Christian principle of salvation by grace, and the renunciation of all personal or meritorious claim upon the divine justice or clemency, appears to have been equally held by all the Reformers, and is stated in our Articles, in strong and unequivocal language. The opinion, also, of the natural inappetency of the human will to every thing spiritually good, and of the necessity of preventing and regenerating grace, to enable man even to lay hold on the offered salvation, are expressly asserted; and the guards which are subsequently introduced, against the abuse of either of these doctrines, are proofs of the ample and un-

qualified sense in which the doctrines were held. Whether the expressions are stronger than would have been used, if the object had not been to refute the presumptuous doctrines of merit, and inherent free will, is another question; but it seems evidently the intention, to disclaim all personal sufficiency on the part of man to work out his own salvation, and at the same time to require his personal exertion and co-operation. It appears to me, therefore, unjust to identify these doctrines with the peculiarities of Calvinism, and to charge those who preach them, with a departure from the principles of the Church; and still more so to infer from her agreement in these doctrines, that our Church symbolizes with all the principles of Calvin.

The first difference of opinion amongst the English Reformers in Edward's time, appears to have arisen on the dress of the clergy. Those divines, who, towards the close of Henry's reign, had withdrawn from the persecution raised by that monarch, in the enforcement of the six articles, had

imbibed, in their intercourse with the Helvetic Churches, a scrupulous dislike of every ancient practice, and a particular objection to the sacerdotal vestments, as relics and instruments of popish superstition. We cannot but lament the severity on the one hand, and the pertinacity on the other, which gave to this controversy, an adventitious importance, and associated a question apparently so trifling, with the fundamental reformation of the Church ; while it laid the foundation of a distinction of parties, which has subsequently been widened by other causes of division. We do not, however, observe, at this period, any disposition between the Reformers, upon questions of doctrine ; but rather a gradual and unanimous progress in the knowledge and establishment of Scriptural truths.

Of the divinity of this period, I know but little from direct examination ; but so far as I can judge, either from historical documents, or from extracts quoted by later writers, and particularly from the digest which remains to us, in the Homilies, I am

confirmed in my impression, of the caution with which these divines touched upon deep and speculative questions, and of the decisions with which they enforced what they held to be evident and fundamental principles.

Burnet mentions, at this time, the *abuses* of the doctrine of predestination, against which, it appears that the caveat at the close of our seventeenth Article is directed ; or rather (perhaps we should say), against which, the whole statement of the doctrine in that remarkable article, is framed. He states, also, the modification, if not the rejection, of this doctrine, by Luther, and the public opposition to it, by Melancthon ; and the earnest cautions against the presumptuous or particular application of it, by those divines who still continued to maintain it.

The great care to restrain this doctrine to its general sense, in our Article, and the total silence observed upon it, in the homilies, seem to indicate that unity of judg-

ment upon this point, was not considered as essential; and that it was thought too deep and mysterious, to be a safe subject of speculation for the people. It is observable, that no such strong cautions or qualifications are inserted respecting the other doctrines of our Church; and yet, I believe, there are not any, in which a spirit of dogmatism has been more freely indulged.

It is remarkable, that Heylin states the Book of Homilies to have been not only objected to, by Calvin, but even to have been a subject of angry declamation with the high predestinarians of that time; though it is approved by those divines of the present day who maintain the Calvinistic interpretation of our Article on that subject. From hence, I think, we may infer, that this doctrine was not then held in that close association with those of original sin and justification, which the course of subsequent controversy has created.

The doctrinal differences amongst the Reformers, appear to be referable to the

reign of Queen Mary, and to have commenced at home and abroad, pretty nearly at the same time. Some of those who were imprisoned for the profession of the Gospel, are said to have denied the doctrines of predestination and original sin; "upon which" (says Neal,) "they were answered by the leading reformers, and especially by Ridley and Bradford;" the latter of whom, we should observe, went much higher in his opinions upon the point of predestination, than the former. But it rather appears that Pelagian, and even Arian principles, were attributed to those who provoked this controversy; and that some of them, at least, extended their objections, to the fundamental doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement.

It should not, however, be overlooked, that such accusations were sometimes urged on the part of the high predestinarians, against those who rejected their peculiar principles, which they held to be inseparably connected with these fundamental doctrines; and that most, if

not all the Reformers so accused, very strenuously disclaimed the heresies imputed to them.

The dissension amongst the exiles at Frankfort, respecting the Liturgy and ceremonies of the Church, as it ended in the separation of the contending parties, seems to have laid the foundation of those differences of doctrine which afterwards unhappily widened the division. The publication of the Geneva Bible, and the proposition of the doctrine of predestination, in the high and peremptory statement of Calvin, involving, as it did, the tremendous doctrine of reprobation, and virtually annihilating the principles of responsibility and conditional salvation, appear to have first brought this doctrine, into controversial discussion within the Church; and the indiscreet and inflammatory language held on political subjects, by some of those who maintained it, caused it to be easily, though perhaps not quite justly, identified with a radical objection to regal authority.

This observation, however, belongs rather to a later period of our enquiry. Any doctrinal controversy that arose at this time, was not sufficiently public or important to divide, or to agitate the Church; and it was by a gradual association with other topics of dissension, that differences of doctrine finally became the prominent distinction between religious parties. The whole polemical strength of the early reformers was directed against the tenets of popery; and the question of transubstantiation was agitated with more vehemence than that of the divine decrees. Indeed, on this latter point, considered as an abstract question of doctrine, we cannot but remark, that all dogmatical decision is carefully avoided; though the opinions of these great men, upon its Scriptural extent and practical consequences, are sufficiently indicated by the caution with which they restrained its particular application, and by the earnestness with which they inculcated the free agency and responsibility of man, and the conditional character of the Gospel

promises. “Although,” says Cranmer (and this seems to have been the general sentiment of his brethren), “God’s promises in Christ be immutable, yet he maketh them not to us, but with condition ; so that, his promise standing, we may yet fail of the promise, because we keep not our promise.”

So far, it appears that the circumstances of the times, fixed the polemical character of our Divinity, and brought into prominent and practical view, the doctrines—of salvation by grace, through faith ;—of original sin ;—of the consequent depravity of man’s nature ;—of his utter destitution of all meritorious claim upon the justice or the mercy of God, and the necessity of a simple and absolute reliance upon the all-sufficient merits of the Redeemer ;—of the futility and guilt of all personal and commutative expedients for the expiation of sin and the purchase of forgiveness ;—and of the indispensable necessity of holiness and purity of life, not as an efficient or procuring cause, but as a pre-

scribed condition, of final salvation, and as the fruit and evidence of that lively and justifying faith, of which it is expressly asserted, that it "worketh by love."

It would be irrelevant to our present object, to enter minutely into intricacies of doctrine, or disputed points of ecclesiastical discipline. Yet, in the theology of the period upon which we are now entering, we cannot entirely overlook the seeds of division which afterwards struck so deep a root, and laid the foundation of some extraneous associations with questions more strictly theological; which, in our own country at least, seem continually to have led to a temporary deflection from the pure and scriptural standard of the Reformation, and to a long and angry contest of religious innovation with political jealousy and alarm.

During the first year of Elizabeth's reign, the ostensible ground of controversy in the Church, was limited to the question of habits

and ceremonies. No doctrinal point appears to have divided the Reformers at this period; and it seems evident, that a doubt of the lawfulness of episcopal government, had not yet arisen among them. "Several of the reformed exiles," says Neal, (himself a non-conformist,) "were offered bishopricks at this time, but refused them, on account of the habits and ceremonies."

Though it seems ungrateful, to quarrel with a reign to which we owe the establishment of the Reformation, we cannot but lament, that Elizabeth's strict exercise of her ecclesiastical supremacy, upon points apparently of little importance, should have excluded so many pious men from the higher offices in the Church; and finally driven some of them back into an exile where all their early prejudices were confirmed, and gradually extended to a general opposition of discipline, and a considerable discrepancy of doctrine.

We must observe, however, that Elizabeth's severity has been vindicated on the

principle, that the ceremonies in dispute, though indifferent in themselves, had been established by legal authority, to which every subject was bound to submit; and that a resistance upon these points, involved the principle of resistance to the government, and tended, not remotely, but obviously and directly, to the subversion of the established Church; as the non-conformists did not merely contend for the free profession of their own principles, but for the enforcement of those principles, upon the nation.

In truth, the spirit of Christian toleration seems to have been but little known to either party; and it is painful to trace the progress of mutual animosity and jealousy, which turned the attention of the Divines of this period, from the general defence of the Protestant faith, to the strict enforcement, or pertinacious rejection, of some ~~minor~~ circumstantialia in religion, — indifferent, perhaps, in themselves, but deriving an adventitious importance from the association with other principles, in which they

were held by each of the contending parties.

Cartwright appears to have been the first, or at least the boldest and most eminent, of the non-conformists who directly and publicly attacked the government of the Church. He is said to have been "at the head of a new generation of Puritans, of warmer spirits, who opened the controversy with the Church in other branches, and struck at some of the main principles of the hierarchy."

But even in these, we do not yet find any symptoms of disloyalty to the civil government. On the contrary, they seem to entertain principles upon that subject, not very remote from those inculcated in the Homilies; as, I think, is proved by Field's confession, in the defence of their famous admonition to the Parliament, as quoted by Neal, from whom I extract the passage:

"We hold," says he, "that Christians may bear offices; that magistrates may

“ put offenders to death lawfully ; that they
“ may wage war, and require a lawful oath
“ of the subject ; that subjects are bound to
“ obey all their just and lawful commands ;
“ to pray for them ; to give them all
“ honour ; to call them by their lawful
“ titles ; and to be ready with their bodies
“ and goods, yea, and all that they have,
“ to serve them with bodily service. Yea,
“ all these things we must do, though they
“ be *Infidels, and obtain their dominion either*
“ *by inheritance, by election, by conquest,*
“ *or otherwise.*” He afterwards states the
duty of magistrates, but without any insinuation that the tie of allegiance is conditional.

It is probable that the necessity for these declarations of loyalty, arose either from some misinterpretation of their principles, on the part of the government, or from a desire to restrain the more licentious and intemperate innovators ; and to vindicate themselves from the imputation of any agreement in principle, with those seditious fanatics who had so much agitated the

Church on the Continent, and were now beginning to be troublesome at home.

Still, I believe that a remnant of the soreness which the cruelties of Mary's reign had left upon the minds of the exiled Reformers, contributed to indispose them to the high prerogative assumed by her sister; and gave rise to a freedom, and perhaps a licentiousness, of political speculation, in some instances, which their subsequent difficulties and discouragements at home, and renewed intercourse with the Helvetic reformers, (who were all of republican principles,) were likely to confirm.

The Brownists, with whom seems to have originated what is called the Independent scheme, innovated still farther, — renounced all connexion and communion with the Church, as popish and anti-christian, — established a democratic government in their own congregations, — and denied the distinct order and character of the priesthood; which they regarded as a temporary and elective office, and subject to re-

sumption by the same popular authority by which it was conferred. Some of this sect are said to have suffered in the course of Elizabeth's reign, for seditious practices, as well as for innovations in religion. The Anabaptists, also, and other fanatics, incurred the penalties of the law, for offences not merely ecclesiastical; and it appears to have been a matter of complaint amongst the Presbyterian party, that they were too often identified with sectaries, whose principles they disclaimed, and whose practices they detested.

I avoid entering into any particulars of the arbitrary proceedings of the court of high commission, and other ecclesiastical tribunals, in this reign, as they have no connexion with our subject, farther than as they widened the schism in the Church, and produced a spirit of reciprocal alienation, which strengthened the influence of every new topic of division. Neither does it fall within our purpose, to enlarge upon the episcopalian controversy, which seems to have been pursued till mutual irritation

quite changed the original question ; and, as the one side would admit no modification, the other would be satisfied with nothing less than subversion ; a consequence certainly much to be deprecated by those who have observed the evils and inconveniences of a popular or fluctuating government in the Church.

While there remained any prospect of an accommodation between the Church and the Puritans, it appears that the controversy was conducted with decency and seriousness, if not always with Christian temper ; but as soon as this prospect was at an end, both parties resorted to new weapons of warfare ; and the separatists began the attack, by a succession of bitter and scurrilous publications against the hierarchy, in which the laws of the land seem to have been as little respected, as the privileges and constitution of the Church. These libels were answered with equal vehemence, by the friends of the Establishment ; and the queen, who held her prerogative involved in the controversy, inflicted upon their

authors, all the severities of the law. 'Some cases of peculiar hardship, in the punishment of suspected libellers, contributed to give popularity to their cause ; and the general impression that these persons were sufferers in defence of religion, exposed the government to all the odium of persecution, and probably kindled the spark of popular hostility, which blazed with such terrible fury in the next century.

Another circumstance, which gave a more just and well-founded popularity to the Puritan party, was their superior strictness in attending to the decencies of religion ; and particularly their earnestness in enforcing the observance of the Sabbath. The strange infatuation (for we can call it nothing less) under which, the governors of the Church in this and the following century, endeavoured to desecrate this 'holy festival, very naturally alarmed the consciences of the pious, as much as it offended the scruples of the precise, and involved an important point of Christian practice ; upon which it appeared that the scriptural decision (by inference at

least, if not by express precept) was clear and unequivocal. Hence, it is probable that at this time, and at a later period, it is certain, that many of the best and wisest Churchmen united with the Puritans, upon this question, and clearly foresaw the ruin of the Church, from so flagrant a violation of Christian discipline — a violation not merely allowed, but actually enforced, by legal authority.

Though, several years before Elizabeth's decease, the Puritans, by the subscription to their Book of Discipline, had associated themselves as a distinct body, — they still professed to hold communion with the Church, and to desire nothing more than a compromise. It seems improbable, however, that where their opposition to episcopacy had been so strong, and aggravated by so firm and irritating a resistance, any measure less violent than its entire abolition, would have softened the prejudices of some of the dissenting party, or satisfied the ambition of others.

So much of the retrospect of this controversy, was necessary to illustrate my idea of its effect upon our theology,—to which I will return in my next letter.

I am, meantime,

Very affectionately, yours.

LETTER XXI.

DOCTRINE OF THE REFORMERS.—PREDESTINATION.

THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION, CAUTIOUSLY STATED BY OUR REFORMERS. — NOT CALVINISTIC. — EXTRACTS IN PROOF OF THIS, FROM LATIMER AND HARPER. — PROBABLE PROOF, IN THE INTRODUCTION OF ERASMUS'S PARAPHRASE, INTO THE CHURCH, AND OMISSION OF THE WRITINGS OF CALVIN. — CALVINISM OF WHITGIFT. — LAMBETH ARTICLES. — CONDITIONAL PREDESTINATION, THE ORIGINAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH. — PROOF OF THE ABERRATION OF DOCTRINE, AT THIS PERIOD. — JUDGMENT OF HOOKER. — POPERY THE GREAT OBJECT OF JEALOUSY WITH ALL PARTIES. — CONSEQUENT PROMINENCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. — ACCESSION OF JAMES. — HAMPTON COURT CONFERENCE. — DISCOURAGEMENT OF THE PURITANS. — ARMINIANISM. — SYNOD OF DORT. — BEARING OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, ON THE CHARACTER OF PULPIT DIVINITY. — INFUSION OF POLITICAL, WITH RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY. — CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is (I think) an observation of Mosheim, that the English Reformers, though generally attached to the principles of Calvin, did not implicitly receive his doctrine respecting predestination. At least, it is evident (as I

have already remarked) that, this doctrine is stated in our Article, with extreme caution, and scrupulously guarded from arbitrary and particular application ; and if we view this Article, in connection with those which treat of our fundamental doctrines, and more particularly in connection with our liturgical offices, we shall find it, as I apprehend, the principle of our Church — to exclude no human being from hope, and to absolve none from responsibility ; to restrain curiosity upon those mysterious questions which are amongst the secret things that belong to the Lord our God ; to lead us to the understanding and appropriation of God's promises, only as they are generally set forth in Scripture ; and to enforce obedience to his will, as it is expressly revealed to us, in his word.

Under such an impression, I would turn with respect and humility, from this awful subject, but that it is necessary to the course of our argument, to investigate the opinion of our early Reformers upon it ; and to endeavour to trace the circumstances which

gradually rendered it a subject of controversy in the Church.

In this enquiry, we must be careful to separate the doctrine in question, from those fundamental principles of Protestantism, in which the fathers of the English Reformation appear to have symbolized with all the reformed churches. We must also observe, that the doubt is not, whether our first Reformers held the doctrine of predestination, but in what sense, they held it. From their belief of the Divine foreknowledge, and from the evidence of prophecies fulfilled, as well as from the frequent intimations in Scripture, of the preparation of particular instruments, for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes of wrath or of mercy,—and, above all, from the express declaration of the apostle, that “whom God did foreknow, “them he did predestinate to be conformed “to the image of his Son,” &c.—these venerable men appear to have drawn their doctrine of predestination and election in Christ, not as an irrespective and arbitrary

privilege, but as a free, and gratuitous, though still a contingent, gift; suspended upon the condition of faith in Christ, and appropriable only through the fulfilment of this condition.

That such was the view of this doctrine entertained by our first Reformers, and that a personal and irrespective application of it, “without reference had to faith in Christ,” was considered by them as presumptuous and unscriptural, is evident from various passages in their writings which we find quoted by the disputants in this controversy. “Think,” says Bishop Latimer, “that God hath chosen those that believe in Christ; and Christ is the Book of Life. If thou believest in him, then art thou written in the Book of Life, and shalt be saved.” And elsewhere, “Those persons,” says he, again, “that be not yet come to Christ, or, if they were come to him, be fallen again from him, *and so lost their justification* (as there be many of us when we fall willingly into sin against

“ conscience); we lose the favour of God,
“ our salvation, and, finally, the Holy
“ Ghost.” And again, in another place,
he says, “ You will say, How shall I know
“ that I am in the Book of Life? How shall
“ I try myself to be the elect of God to
“ everlasting life? I answer, first, we may
“ know that we may be one time, in the
“ Book, and another time, come out again,
“ as it appeareth by David, who was writ-
“ ten in the Book of Life, but when he
“ sinned, he, at that time, was out of the
“ favour of God, until he repented, and
“ was sorry for his faults. So that we may
“ be in the Book at one time, and after-
“ wards, when we forget God and his word,
“ and do wickedly, we come out of the
“ Book, that is, out of Christ, who is the
“ Book.”

As to their judgment of the doctrine of particular or partial redemption, and the arbitrary exclusion of any individuals from salvation, the following testimonies of Lati-mer and Hooper, are decisive.

“Seeing,” says the former, “that the preaching of the Gospel is universal, it appeareth that God would have all mankind saved, and that the fault is not in him, if they be damned; for it is written thus, *God would have all men to be saved*. But we are so wicked of ourselves, that we refuse the same, and will not take notice when it is offered to us.” — “The cause of rejection or damnation,” says Hooper, “is sin in man,” (not *predestination*, take notice), “who will not hear, neither receive, the promise of the Gospel; or, after he hath received it,” (not *heard* it, only, as I should conceive, but *heard* it, at least with present acceptance), “by accustomed doing of ill, falleth either into a contempt of the Gospel, and will not study to live thereafter; or else hateth the Gospel, because it condemneth his ungodly life.”

Against their belief of any absolute or personal decree of reprobation, as relating to the privileges of a future life, the following passages are equally explicit.

“ Cain,” says Hooper, “ was no more
 “ excluded from the promise of Christ, till
 “ he excluded himself, than Abel ; Saul
 “ than David ; Judas than Peter ; Esau
 “ than Jacob.” — “ God is said to have
 “ hated Esau, *not* because he was disinhe-
 “ rited of eternal life, but in laying his he-
 “ ritage and his mountains waste for the
 “ dragons of the wilderness ;” and “ the
 “ threatenings of God against Esau, if he
 “ had not of his wilful malice, excluded
 “ himself from the promise of grace, would
 “ no more have hindered his salvation,
 “ than God’s threatenings against Nineveh
 “ hindered him from sparing that city, at
 “ that time ; which, nevertheless, stood
 “ forty years after.”

To the same purpose, and citing the
 same remarkable example, Latimer says,
 “ Christ only, and no man else, merited re-
 “ mission, justification, and eternal felicity,
 “ for as many as will believe the same.
 “ Christ shed as much blood for Judas, as
 “ for Peter : Peter believed it, and there-
 “ fore was saved ; Judas would not believe,

“and therefore was condemned; the fault
“being in himself only, and nobody else.”

Of the judgment of the other Reformers who were employed in the compilation of our Articles, I know nothing so specific as the above quotations; but it appears to me that the general tenor of Cranmer's doctrine, is inconsistent with the notion of an absolute decree; and it is upon record, that Ridley dissented from the opinion of Bradford, on this subject.

Another argument, and I think a strong one, may be urged to show that the general sense of the compilers of our Articles, was unfavourable to the Calvinistic view of this doctrine (for into their Calvinism upon other points, I do not enter); I allude here, to the remarkable fact of their introduction of Erasmus's Paraphrase into public use, under Edward the Sixth and Elizabeth, and the establishment of it, as a standard exposition in the churches, under the sanction of royal authority. If this step had been taken in the reign of Henry, some

necessity for caution or compromise, might be pleaded ; but Edward's own principles, and those of his more immediate instructors, seem to have rather leaned to the Calvinistic system ; and Elizabeth does not appear to have looked with any jealousy, upon the doctrine of the decrees, till Whitgift's attempt, many years after, to define and enforce it, by additional and explanatory articles.

Now, if you recollect that Calvin died in 1564, that his Institutes had been published in 1536*, and his Commentary (which extended to almost all the books of Scripture) at different periods, previous to the establishment of our Church by authority, you can hardly (I think) reconcile this public adoption of the work of a professed opponent of his doctrine, to the supposition of

Many editions of the Institutes were published during Calvin's life, and each, with considerable additions. The last appeared but a short time before his death.

an acquiescence in that doctrine, on the part of our Reformers.

The refusal also, in 1565, to allow in England, the reprinting of the Geneva Bible, which appears to have been persisted in, till 1576, affords a strong confirmation to this argument; and I would farther observe, that, popular as the Institutes afterwards became in England, and high as their authority stood, even in the Universities, their reception was of a date long subsequent to this period; and does not appear to have become general, till some years after Whitgift's accession to the archiepiscopal chair. *

I have before me an old translation of the Institutes, by "Thomas Norton," published in 1578, in the preface to which, is a reference to a former translation undertaken by the same hand, "in the very beginning of the Queenes Majesties reigne,"—"at the request of Reginald Wolfe and Edward Whitechurch, *Her Majesty's Printers.*" No mention is made of any interest, public or personal, having been taken in either translation by any eminent characters in the Church;

On the whole, a general, and (if you will allow me the expression) a conditional, predestination, as consistent with free agency,

nor is any critic referred to, by name, as having been engaged in the revisal of the work, but the Reverend "David Whitehead."

Of David Whitehead, we are told by Neal, that "he had been one of the exiles at Frankfort, where he answered the objections of Doctor Horn* concerning church-discipline and worship;" that "on his return to England, the Queen, out of her high esteem for him, offered him the archbishopric of Canterbury; but he refused it, from puritanical principles, and would accept of no preferment in the Church, as it then stood."

Without disputing the Calvinism of some of our churchmen, at either of the periods here mentioned (particularly the latter), and even acknowledging that the doctrine distinguished by this epithet, is fairly separable from the discipline, and was held in some eminent instances, under such a separation, may we not ask,

* Horn, he it observed, was of the Church of England principles; had been nominated by Cox, to the charge of the congregation at Frankfort, which Whitehead had resigned; had, upon his return to England, accepted (under Elizabeth) the bishopric of Winchester; and, in conjunction with Bishop Jewel, distinguished himself in defence of the established discipline of the Church.

directed and encouraged, assisted and influenced, but not over-ruled, by the Divine grace (and not a predestination unconditional and absolute, involving necessity and irresistible impulse), appears to me to be the doctrine maintained by our Reformers, and expressed in the 17th Article, as precisely, as the great difficulty of the subject permitted; and this view of the doctrine seems clearly separable from any presumption of human merit or sufficiency, or from the ascription, in any sense, of a *natural* freedom and rectitude, to the human will; which seems to have been the error imputed to the Pelagians.

whether this very circumstance does not suggest a doubt of its *general* reception? — Is it likely that a translation of a book of such celebrity, confessedly speaking the sentiments of a very powerful and considerable party within the Church, if it were supposed to have influenced, or even to express, her received and acknowledged principles, would not, even so late as 1578, have been revised and patronized by some of her eminent dignitaries? and is it to be supposed, that if such patronage had been afforded, it would not have been gratefully acknowledged by the translator?

This, however, involves another question; viz. Whether the grace to prepare and turn himself to faith and calling upon God, without which man is said to be utterly impotent, and even by his nature, averse from such an effort, may not consist in this very liberation of the will; whether it is communicated partially, or generally; and whether, if the latter, this first communication of Divine grace, does not bring man generally into a capacity for salvation, and leave his final attainment of it, contingent upon his obedience to the terms of the Gospel covenant, for which farther assistance is promised and vouchsafed in every step of his Christian progress?

It has indeed been objected to this view, that the doctrine of a conditional predestination, involves a contradiction. But till we are able to solve the other difficulties in Scripture, and especially to reconcile the idea of moral responsibility, with absolute decrees, this apparent inconsistency of the contingency of human actions, with the fore-

knowledge of the Deity, affords no sufficient ground of objection to the doctrine.

You will remember, that my present object, is only to state what I conceive to have been the view of our Reformers, and not to express any opinion of my own, upon a question which I dare not investigate. Indeed, upon some of the positions educed in the subsequent controversy, I do not entertain the same hesitation; as I think I clearly perceive their repugnance to the general testimony of Scripture and of our Church.

I have already mentioned the *abuse* of predestination, which is said to have accompanied, and, in fact, preceded, the introduction of that doctrine, as an article in our Church, and to have occasioned such a moderate and cautious proposition of it, as should leave the Divine attributes reconcilable with human liberty.

The pernicious doctrine of necessity, which seems, indeed, an inevitable corollary

from that of an absolute and irreversible decree, was broached by some fanatics, particularly on the Continent, at an early period of the Reformation, and pursued to all the iniquity of its practical consequences. This led our reformers early to examine the foundation of their principle of predestination, and to modify and guard it, by a careful collation with other doctrines of Scripture; and, though the Church was early divided upon scruples of dress and of ceremonies, no controversial discussion upon this principle seems to have taken place, till the long residence of some of our early Puritans at Geneva had attached them to the doctrine, as well as the discipline of Calvin, and led them to maintain his high and unmodified principles, through all the metaphysical difficulties in which they are entangled.

It is observable, that the different views of doctrine at this time did not fall in with the distinctions of religious party; but seem to have been entertained as points of private opinion, till the abortive attempt of

Archbishop Whitgift to enforce the celebrated Lambeth articles, as an authoritative exposition of the doctrine of the Church.

From this period, the more liberal and mitigated interpretation of our Articles, which had been early maintained in the Church, and was supposed to be sanctioned by Scripture, as well as by the judgment of the first Reformers, was strenuously preached by many eminent Churchmen; while the doctrine of absolute predestination, with its consequences, became the distinction of the Puritan divines, and the point of union for many of those, who had separated on other questions from the Establishment. The pulpit became a school of controversy, and the Church an arena for theological gladiators, till the zeal and activity of the Puritan party gradually diffused their principles amongst the people.

It is a very remarkable fact, and corroboration (I think) of the general aberration of doctrine which I have supposed, from the standard of the Reformation, that

nearly the same propositions, which I have quoted above from Latimer and Hooper, and enforced by the same striking example, are advanced at this period (soon after the conferences at Lambeth,) by a Divine of Cambridge, in a sermon before the University, and objected to as novel and heretical. “God” (says the preacher) “created all men according to his own likeness in Adam, and, consequently, to eternal life; from which he rejects no man but on account of his sins.” — “Christ died for all mankind, and was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; the remedy provided by him, being as extensive as the ruins of the fall.” — “The promises of eternal life made to us in Christ, are to be generally and universally taken and understood; being made as much to Judas as to Peter.” For these propositions, we are told that the preacher was summoned before the Vice-Chancellor and heads of Colleges, who examined him by several interrogatories, and peremptorily commanded him to abstain from those controversies in, his lectures

and sermons for the future. 'Yet the University not being satisfied with him, he was obliged the next year to quit his professorship, and retire to London, where he died.

At the present period it seems strange to our apprehension, that such propositions as those of the Lambeth conference, should have been deduced from the articles of our Church. But as we have happily no concern in the controversy, beyond its connection with our general subject, I shall merely observe, that these propositions seem to have referred almost exclusively to the seventeenth article ; and to have left our fundamental doctrines, if not altogether untouched, at least clearly separable from inferences so harsh and arbitrary.

In this light it appears they were viewed by the venerable Hooker, who, maintaining explicitly the doctrine of justification by faith, as explicitly maintained those of conditional salvation and moral responsibility. The doctrine delivered in his first

public sermon at Paul's Cross, (and which was the occasion of much subsequent controversy,) though couched in the scholastic phrase of the times, is decisive upon these important articles, and completely at variance with the high Calvinistic interpretation, which was then becoming popular in the Church. Nay, it goes so far as to insinuate the opinion, (which, however agreeable to reason or Scripture, was still recent, in a Church but gradually emerging from the exclusive prejudices of popery,) that man will be judged according to his advantages, and rendered accountable, in proportion to the degree of light and grace which the mercy of God has afforded him. *

* The proposition against which the Puritans excepted, (as stated in his life) is as follows: "That in God there were two wills; an antecedent, and a consequent will: his first will, that all mankind should be saved; but his second will was, that those only should be saved, who did live answerable to that degree of grace which he had offered or afforded them."

It appears that Elmer, Bishop of London, who was present at the sermon, made no objection to this doctrine.

This last opinion, upon which Hooker grounds his judgment, of the possibility of salvation in the Church of Rome, appears to have been the only one directly objected to by Whitgift; who would certainly have been ready enough to censure the doctrines of conditional predestination, permissive evil, and rejection only upon account of wickedness foreseen,—if the general and accredited interpretation of the Church had been consonant to his own view of these doctrines, as afterwards exhibited in the Lambeth articles.

I have already observed, that Whitgift did not venture to propose these articles publicly, nor attempt to introduce them as an authoritative addition to the doctrine of the Church, but merely as explanatory propositions; and I may here add, that Elizabeth is said to have been much displeased at the Archbishop's conduct in this transaction, and to have commanded her secretary to signify her disapprobation to him by letter.

But the object of universal detestation in this reign, to all parties in the Church, was Popery : and to this circumstance, I think we may trace the prominence of the doctrine of justification by faith, and the jealous depreciation of all human works, (as indicating a presumption of personal merit, and entrenching upon the freeness of the Gospel salvation,) which was at this time the predominant character of our theology. Upon this principle there was no dissention ; and those perversions had not yet arisen, which, by turning the grace of God into licentiousness, rendered it necessary more distinctly to enforce the obligation of moral obedience.

In this state matters appear to have remained, till the close of Elizabeth's reign ; the respective parties weary of contention, and resting, as it were, upon their arms,—and the Puritans, anticipating in the expected accession of James, a patron who would at once espouse their opinions, protect their persons, and establish their dis-

cipline, which had gradually become more and more identified with their peculiarities of doctrine; though, from what we have seen in the instance of Whitgift, and many others who might be mentioned, it appears that they were not invariably connected. But the spirit of civil, as well as of religious insubordination, which had gradually grown out of a long and pertinacious opposition to the established constitution of the Church, alarmed James for the security of his prerogative, and led him to extend his favour and protection, exclusively to that party, from which he was most likely to receive allegiance and support.

It was natural that the original education of James should have inclined him to the principles of Calvinism; and he seems to have been equally partial to its discipline, while under the eye of the rulers of his own Church. But the severity of their manners to himself, as well as the strictness of their general system, seems to have excited an early disgust in his mind, and to

have confirmed, upon motives even more direct and personal than those of identity of interest, his partiality to the English hierarchy, with whose privileges he conceived his own to be essentially involved.

Actuated, as it appears, by these motives, and, it is to be hoped, with a desire to promote, by any prudent and reasonable concession, the pacification of the Church, James agreed to be present at the conference at Hampton Court, between the leaders of the respective parties ; professing, however, his own attachment to the constitution of the Church of England, and his determination to preserve the ecclesiastical state, in such form as he found it established by law, and only to reform such abuses as he should find apparently proved.

With the questions of Church discipline discussed in this conference, we have no concern ; but we must not overlook the attempt of the Calvinists, to obtain the

addition of the Lambeth articles, to those already established as the doctrine of the Church, and the introduction of a clause into the sixteenth, stating positively the doctrine of final perseverance, which that article had left hypothetical.

These innovations, it appears, were negatived, though Whitgift and Bancroft, who had drawn up the Lambeth articles some years before, were leaders in the conference on the episcopal side, and though James himself is said still to have retained his Calvinistic principles. From this fact, without referring to the writings of individuals, I think we may infer, that the interpretation given in these articles, was not consonant to the acknowledged judgment of the Church, upon the doctrines of predestination and redemption.

These primitive doctrines (if I may so call them, with reference to the opinions of our early Reformers,) of general redemption, and conditional election or pre-

destination, were afterwards branded with the name of Arminianism ; and the divines who advocated the milder interpretation of our articles, were stigmatized by the Puritans, (who yet did not reject the name of Calvinists,) as followers of a foreign hierarchy, and apostates from the principles of the Reformation. *

I need not here trouble you with the particulars of the Arminian controversy, with which you are sufficiently acquainted. But I must remind you, that although at a subsequent period it assumed a different form, and was rendered more comprehensive (as is too often the case of religious disputes,) by other subjects of contention, it was, at first, strictly confined to the points of predestination and grace ; and that upon the *latter* article particularly, the third

The above observation is not intended to imply any disrespect for the character of the Genevan Reformer ; but merely to suggest the inconsistency of adopting a religious denomination from one leader, and applying the name of another as a term of reproach.

proposition of the Arminian doctrine, appears to coincide with the tenth article of our Church. *

I make this remark, because I have observed that the doctrine of free will, attributed to the followers of Arminius, has given more offence, than their tenet of universal redemption ; and because I think it necessary

* Arminian Proposition.

“ True faith cannot proceed from the exercise
 “ of our natural faculties
 “ and powers ; nor from
 “ the force and operation
 “ of free will ; since man,
 “ in consequence of his natural corruption, is *incapable* either of *thinking* or
 “ *doing any good thing* ;
 “ and therefore it is necessary to his *conversion* and
 “ *salvation*, that he be *re-generated* and renewed
 “ by the operation of the
 “ Holy Ghost, which is
 “ the gift of God, through
 “ Jesus Christ.”

Tenth Article.

“ The condition of man,
 “ after the fall of Adam,
 “ is such, that he cannot
 “ turn and prepare himself
 “ by his own natural
 “ strength and good works
 “ to faith and calling upon
 “ God. Wherefore, we
 “ have no power to do
 “ good works, pleasant and
 “ acceptable to God, without the grace of God by
 “ Christ preventing us, that
 “ we may have a good will,
 “ and working with us,
 “ when we have that good
 “ will.”

to point out a distinction between the original and the later Arminians ; some of whom, it must be owned, carried this doctrine so far, as greatly to diminish, if not quite to set aside, the necessity of divine grace in the work of conversion. I am not, however, aware, that this error is to be imputed to our orthodox divines of any period ; and I think you will find that a very different doctrine is maintained, by those of the seventeenth century, who dissented from the judgment of the synod of Dort.

It appears that James retained for some years his attachment to the speculative tenets of Calvinism, and commissioned those divines, who were his representatives at this synod, to join in the condemnation of the Arminian doctrines, and to adopt the Belgic confession, with the exception of the articles relating to discipline.

It is worth while, here, to copy a passage of Neal, which shows that these Calvinistic divines, (for Calvinistic they undoubtedly

were, individually,) who, attended at Dort on behalf of the English Church, were not quite agreed in the explication of their own principles, and were inclined to be moderate in the proposition of them. It would be hard to reconcile the scheme of Doctors Ward and Davenant, with the ideas of arbitrary reprobation, or of partial or irresistible grace.

“ When the opinion of the British divines was read, upon the extent of Christ’s redemption, it was observed, that they *omitted* the received distinction between the sufficiency and the efficacy of it ; nor did they touch upon the received limitation of those passages, which, speaking of Christ dying for the whole world, are usually interpreted of the world of the elect ; Dr. Davenant and some of his brethren, inclining to the doctrine of universal redemption. In all other points, there was a perfect harmony ; and even in this, Balcanqual says, King James, and the archbishop of Canterbury, desired them to comply ; though

“ Keylin says, their instructions were, not
 “ to oppose the doctrine of universal re-
 “ demption. But Doctors Davenant and
 “ Ward were for a middle course between
 “ the two extremes ; they maintained the
 “ certainty of the salvation of the elect,
 “ and that offers of pardon were sent, not
 “ only to all who should believe and re-
 “ pent, but to all who heard the Gospel ;—
 “ and that grace sufficient to convince and
 “ persuade the impenitent, (so as to lay the
 “ blame of their condemnation upon them-
 “ selves,) went along with those offers ;—
 “ that the redemption of Christ, and his
 “ merits, were applicable to these, and
 “ that, consequently, there was a possibi-
 “ lity of their salvation. However, they
 “ complied with the synod, and declared
 “ their confession, in the main, agreeable
 “ to the word of God.”

But, perhaps, you will tell me, that I
 am wandering from my subject, and fight-
 ing a windmill in endeavouring to prove,
 that ultra Calvinism is not the doctrine of
 our Church. My object, however, is only

to show, that it was the fear of this ultra Calvinism, (which was certainly maintained by most of the fanatics, who afterwards overturned both the Church and the Government,) that introduced a new didactic character, but not a new principle, into our English divinity; and led our theologians, more frequently to dwell on the doctrines of moral probation and responsibility,—to urge the necessity of practical holiness, as an indispensable condition of salvation,—and to expatiate more rarely upon those divine promises, which had been abused, to the subversion of all morality, by a presumptuous and arbitrary appropriation.

The political infusion, which tinged almost all religious controversy, during the reigns of James and Charles, but particularly the latter,—the horror of popery, on the part of the nation,—and the jealousy of Calvinism entertained by the sovereign, and by the friends of the established discipline in the Church,—gave rise to a certain controversial antithesis in the statement of disputed doctrines, and gradually narrowed

the principle of each, to the peculiarity in which it differed from others. The impossibility, under recent and personal irritation, of separating religious from political disaffection, and the too evident identification of both, whether necessary or casual, with the Calvinistic principles, excited a jealousy of these principles, not confined to their moral or spiritual operation, and led to a general and decided avowal of the Arminian persuasion, on the points of predestination and grace, not only as most agreeable to the doctrine of Scripture and of the Church, but as most consonant to the principles of loyalty and civil allegiance.

It is singular enough, that the Arminian tenets seem to have been held in a different connexion in Holland; and to have been viewed with jealousy by the Stadtholder Maurice, on account of their republican tendency. And, indeed, at a later period of our own history, these tenets, (in a very exaggerated form,) became the distinction of a party in the Church, whose political

principles, though not designedly hostile to a regal government, led to speculations, which, eventually, overturned the oldest monarchy in Europe.

This is one instance, amongst many others, that facts often baffle the calculations of philosophy ; and that metaphysical associations are not always uniform in their influence upon human actions. We must not, however, infer from hence, that such associations are indifferent ; for, though their effects may be sometimes counteracted by the operation of other causes, experience and revelation combine to prove, that a false principle can hardly be held, even in an abstract form, without producing results injurious to happiness, or to virtue.

This is a truth, too little considered by those liberalists in modern education, who maintain that speculative opinions are immaterial ; and I believe, is one main cause of the low and fluctuating character of our worldly morality. How grateful should we

oe, my dear friend, that under the pressure of so many contending motives and influences, as occur to actuate us in our progress through the world, we are not left to work out principles, and draw deductions for ourselves.

LETTER XXII.

DOCTRINE OF THE REFORMERS. — JUSTIFICATION.

GRADUAL ABERRATION FROM THE PRIMITIVE DOCTRINE UPON THIS ARTICLE. — PROBABLE CAUSE OF THIS ABERRATION. — STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE IN THE HOMILIES. — QUESTION RESPECTING A FIRST AND FINAL JUSTIFICATION. — SELF-RENUNCIATION, THE PRINCIPLE OF THE GOSPEL AND OF THE CHURCH. — PROBABLE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR EFFICACY ATTRIBUTED TO FAITH, AS THE INSTRUMENT OR CONDITION OF JUSTIFICATION. — PRACTICAL HOLINESS ENFORCED BY THE REFORMERS. — UNION OF FAITH AND CHARITY. — MISTAKES UPON THE NATURE OF GOOD WORKS, NOTICED IN THE HOMILY ON THAT SUBJECT. — OBSCURITY ARISING FROM THE INDISCRIMINATE USE OF THE WORDS JUSTIFICATION AND SALVATION. — DISTINCTION SUBSEQUENTLY MADE BY DIVINES. — HOOKER. — ANTINOMIAN ABUSE OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION. — CONSEQUENT PROMINENCE OF MORALITY IN PULPIT COMPOSITIONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

BEFORE we proceed farther in our enquiry, we must revert to the doctrine of our Reformers, upon the article of Justification; a point necessary to be settled, in order to ascertain the fidelity of our later divines to the principles of the Church.

On this subject, I shall confine myself to a few extracts from the homilies, as the *latest authoritative* documents of the Reformers, and, consequently, the fairest evidence of their final judgment upon this doctrine.

I observed, in a former letter, that whatever differences of opinion might have existed upon the more recondite points of theology, the great Christian principles of salvation by grace, and the renunciation of all personal or meritorious claim upon the divine justice or clemency, appear to have been equally held by all the Reformers, and are stated in our articles, in strong and unequivocal language.

In this doctrine, however; as in that of predestination, a gradual aberration from the primitive standard, seems to have arisen, from the polemical character of the times; and, eventually, to have exhibited the Gospel privilege, of justification by the merits of Christ, through faith, as effectually and inalienably conveyed to the be-

liever, upon his simple acceptance, independent of the obligation to practical holiness, which was considered as the fruit of an election, gratuitous and unconditional, rather than as the requisite to a still contingent salvation.

It was this connexion with the Calvinistic scheme of predestination, that led to a gradual exaggeration of the doctrine, and a denial of the necessity of farther condition, where no contingency was supposed to exist. The depreciatory language applied by our Reformers to good works, (as contradistinguished from justifying faith),—in which they included, not only those which were superstitiously comprehended under the term, but every performance that could be pleaded by man, as a personal or meritorious title to justification,—was understood as rejecting the idea of conditional salvation, from a fear of associating it with that of desert; whereas it would rather appear, on examining their doctrine more particularly, that their main object was, not only to distinguish these ideas, but explicitly to incul-

cate the former, while they disclaimed the latter.

For proof of this position, let us refer to the statement of the doctrine in the homilies, and first enquire, what is that justification which is there said to be obtained by faith?

“ Because all men be sinners,” (says the homily on Salvation,) “ and offenders
“ against God, therefore, can no man, by
“ his own acts, works, and deeds, (seem
“ they never so good,) be justified and made
“ righteous before God ; but every man, of
“ necessity, is constrained to seek for *un-*
“ *other* righteousness or justification, *that is*
“ *to say, the forgiveness of his sins and tres-*
“ *passes, in such things as he hath offended :*
“ and this justification or righteousness,
“ which we so receive of God’s mercy, and
“ Christ’s merits, embraced by faith, is
“ taken, accepted, and allowed of God, for
“ our perfect and full justification.”

Here, I imagine that justification is taken in its simple reference to the remission of sin, through the atonement of Christ; by which, it appears that man is released from the condemnation which his offences had deserved, restored to his federal and adoptive relation to God, and rendered capable, with God's grace preventing and assisting him, of that subsequent improvement in holiness, without which, we are told that no man shall see the Lord.

This view, would, indeed, tend to establish the doctrine of a first and a final justification; and though so much exception has been made against it, as tending to encourage pride and self-dependence, I cannot but think this doctrine (in substance, at least,) is inculcated by our Church, and maintained by our first reformers and divines.

If justification be invariably identified with a certainty of final salvation, there seems to be an end of the notion of responsibility, and of the probationary state in

which believers are represented to be placed, by their reception into the Gospel covenant. And the admission, or rather the assertion, of our Reformers, that this justification, after it has been obtained, may be lost again, appears clearly to designate it as the re-admission into the covenant of grace, — the restoration to a capacity of salvation, — the being received as righteous, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, and saved from the guilt, strengthened against the power, and eventually delivered from the punishment, of sin ; — the being made, in a word, partakers of the blessings of the Gospel covenant, • “ by which,” says the apostle, “ ye are saved, *if* ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, “ *unless* ye have believed in vain.”

This Gospel, • which Paul preached, and of which he here reminds his converts, was, indeed, the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, in which they were to trust for salvation ; but of which, it appears, they might still lose the benefit ; as is evident from the exception, “ *unless* ye have believed in

vain." And it should not be overlooked, that this exception immediately follows (with only the interval of some temporary and occasional advice,) the remarkable chapter, in which charity, or Christian practice in its perfection, is exalted even above the highest instances of faith.

I think it is evident, that our Reformers entertained this double view of justification, and spoke of it sometimes in its forensic sense, (as relating to the forgiveness of past sins, through the atonement,) while on other occasions, they have used it more largely, to express the final admission of the believer to eternal life. A remarkable instance occurs of *both* senses, at the close of the first homily on good works; in which the example of the penitent thief, an eminent instance of final justification by faith, is adduced, indeed, in direct proof of that doctrine, yet not so as to impugn, but rather to confirm, the general notion of an initial or conditional justification, or, to state it more precisely, an initial justification and conditional covenant. "The thief

“ that was hanged when Christ suffered,
 “ did believe only, and the most merciful
 “ God justified him. And because no man
 “ shall say again, that he lacked time to
 “ do good works, for else he would have
 “ done them, *truth it is*, and I will not
 “ contend therein. But this I will surely
 “ affirm, that *faith only saved him. If he*
 “ *had lived and not regarded faith, and*
 “ *the works thereof, he should have lost his*
 “ *salvation again.*”

The sentiment of Latimer (which I have
 already quoted upon another point,) seems
 also to agree with this view of the doctrine.
 “ Those persons,” says he, “ that be not
 “ yet come to Christ, or if they were come
 “ to him, be fallen again from him, and
 “ *so lost their justification*, (as there be
 “ many of us, when we fall willingly into
 “ sin against conscience;) we lose the fa-
 “ vour of God, *our salvation*, and finally
 “ the Holy Ghost.”

You must not, however, misunderstand
 me; or suppose me to doubt that this jus-

tification includes a certain promise of salvation, though it have not time to bring forth "good works," and a life according to God's commandments. I would only assert, that if there be time, it is necessary that faith should be perfected and proved, by a course of Christian obedience; and that upon the *concurrence* of *both*, is suspended the promise of final salvation. But I would add, in the words of our homily, that "all this is brought to pass, *only* through " the *merits* and deservings of our saviour " Christ; and not through our merits, or " through the merit of any virtue that we " have within us, or of" any work that " cometh from us;" and, therefore, that " in respect of merit and deserving, we " forsake, as it were, altogether again, " faith, works, and all other virtues."

And here, as I apprehend, is the true principle of the Church and of the Gospel; the principle of self-renunciation. The exclusion of any thing that we can do or deserve, towards the purchase of a meritorious acceptance with God. The conviction,

that all our thoughts, and words, and works, are tainted with the blemish of corruption, and stand in need of the propitiation made by the sacrifice of Christ. That, after all our best endeavours, we must throw ourselves entirely and unreservedly upon this sacrifice for salvation, and acknowledge, that “there is no other name given among men,” but the name of the blessed Jesus, “whereby we must be saved.”

I will venture to quote one passage more, (from the third part of the homily on salvation,) as explanatory of the *cause* of the peculiar efficacy attributed to faith, as the instrument or condition of justification, and also illustrative of this principle of self-renunciation, on which the Gospel scheme of salvation is built.

“Truth it is, that our own works do not
“justify us, to speak properly of our *justifi-*
“*cation* ; that is to say, our works do not
“*merit* or *deserve* remission of our sins,
“and make us, of unjust, just before God ;
“but God of his mere mercy, through the

“ only merits and deservings of his son
“ Jesus Christ, doth justify us. Neverthe-
“ less, *because* faith doth directly send us
“ to Christ for the remission of our sins,
“ and that by faith, given us of God, *we*
“ *embrace* the promise of God’s mercy, and
“ of the remission of our sins, (which
“ thing none other of our virtues or works
“ properly doth,) *therefore*, Scripture useth
“ to say, that faith without works doth
“ justify.”

But while our Reformers ascribe its full efficacy to this saving and justifying faith, as that act of the mind through which alone we can appropriate the blessing of a vicarious atonement, they also refer to it as the root and principle of Christian obedience, and inculcate such obedience, as a necessary condition of salvation; as the evidence, the fruit, and the perfection of a sincere and genuine faith. Their doctrine seems clearly to be, that as the work is worthless without the principle, the principle is vain without the work, “ if there be time and
“ opportunity thereto; ” and that “ the

“ keeping of God’s commandments,” because we faithfully believe them to be such, “ be the very way,” (to use their own strong language,) “ that doth lead to everlasting life.”

“ The faith that is necessary for the obtaining of our salvation,” (says the homily of faith) “ *hath charity always joined unto it*, and is fruitful, bringing forth all “ good works.” To this doctrine, indeed, Luther objects, as popish, in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians ; but his zeal against popery in that early production, seems to have driven him towards the opposite extreme, and led to an apparent, though certainly not an intentional, depreciation of moral obedience. The dissent of our Reformers, from his opinion upon this point, and from that of Calvin, upon some others, proves that they did not implicitly follow any foreign authority.

It appears to be the leading object, in the homilies on justification and faith, as well as in the article which relates to the same

doctrines, to overthrow the presumptuous notion of human merit, and to place Christian hope on its only true foundation, a dependence on the merits of Christ. In the homily on good works, and the articles on the same subject, we have this foundation still prominently and exclusively maintained; but we have also an explicit enforcement of the duty of evangelical obedience, (as a requisite to the attainment of final salvation,) and a clear distinction of those "laws of God that lead to everlasting life," from those "traditions and laws of men," by which Gentile, as well as Pharisaic perversion, is said to have "made the law of God of none effect."

I observed, in one of my former letters, that much of the depreciatory language applied by our early Reformers, to "good works," referred to those works of superstition, or of supererogation, which presumption and will worship, had substituted for true piety and moral obedience; and I find a passage in one of the homilies on good works, which confirms this observ-

tion. Here it is asserted, that “it is by
“ *mistaking the nature* of good works, that
“ man hath highly displeased God, and
“ gone from his will and commandment ;”
and the successive corruptions of idolatry,
pharisaism, and popery, are adduced, as
successive innovations and “ devices of men,
“ whereby the laws and commandments of
“ God are overthrown ;” and, to make the
distinction still clearer, it is stated in ano-
ther place, that “ the works which God
“ would have his people to walk in, are
“ such as he hath commanded in his Holy
“ Scripture,” (of which a portion of the
decatalogue is cited as an example,) “ and
“ not such works as men have studied out
“ of their own brain.”

I need not trouble you with more quota-
tions, to prove a point of which you make
no question ; viz. that our Reformers held
at once, the freedom of divine grace in the
remission of sin, and the contingency of
final salvation. But, before we proceed, I
must beg of you to distinguish between the

Calvinistic doctrines of grace, and the Antinomianism which grew out of them, and against which, much of the strong and controversial language of our subsequent divinity, is directed. "It is unfair," (says Doctor Jortin, who will not be suspected of much charity to Calvinism,) "to charge men with all the consequences which may follow from their opinions, when they neither draw them, nor perceive them, nor own them." And this caution, whatever men may think of the principles, they should certainly observe, with respect to some eminent divines in our Church, who, while they espoused the Calvinistic doctrines, strenuously disclaimed and controverted every licentious inference and interpretation.

But to return to our subject:—It was not (I think) as a condition of justification, considered in its initial or primary sense, (as the privilege of remission of past sin, through the application of the sacrifice of Christ,) that our Reformers taught the ne-

cessity, of moral obedience. This original blessing they annexed, to the simple act of laying hold on the offered propitiation, with an entire dependence on its sufficiency, and an humble acknowledgment of man's utter destitution of any claim of right, upon the divine mercy. They did not teach the necessity of good works, as contributing to the initial act of justification, but they prescribed them as indispensably necessary to the perfection and fruition of this privilege, in the attainment of everlasting life; and it is evident, from the example of the penitent thief quoted above, that they considered this justifying faith, as the root and principle of future obedience, and that they annexed no promise of salvation, to a faith of any other description.

It seems to have been from an indiscriminate use of the words justification and salvation, sometimes synonymously, and at others, in a different sense, that the doctrine of our Reformers upon this point, has been brought into question. A similar applica-

tion of these expressions in Scripture, appears to have been at once their example and authority, and not to have created any difficulty or dispute, till the high Calvinistic doctrine of election, precluded the notion of conditions altogether from the Christian covenant, as detracting from the free grace and mercy of God.

From this time, we find, in the writings of our divines, a marked distinction between the original act of justification, (an act perfectly gratuitous,) and the attainment of final salvation, which they still held to be conditional; and towards this attainment of final salvation, they taught the indispensable necessity of obedience, or, in other words, “good works.”

“There is,” says Hooker, “a justifying, “and a sanctifying, righteousness:” — “that, whereby we are justified, is perfect, “but not inherent;—that, whereby we are “sanctified, is inherent, but not perfect.”— And again—“Ye are made free from sin,

“and, are made servants to God; this is
 “the righteousness of justification:—ye
 “have your fruit unto holiness; this is the
 “righteousness of sanctification. By the
 “one, we are interested in the right of in-
 “heriting; by the other, we are brought
 “to the actual possession of eternal bliss;
 “and so the end of both is everlasting
 “life.”

If the distinction here so clearly expressed, had been always held in view by our divines, the Church would have been spared much unprofitable controversy; and the mysteries and duties, the privileges and obligations of our holy faith, would have been exhibited in beautiful harmony. But polemical zeal on either side, appears gradually to have diverged from the primitive standard, till the consistent and co-active graces of faith and holiness were violently separated:—the gospel doctrine of salvation by grace, was urged to disprove the requisition of moral obedience,—and the acknowledged inability of fallen man, to keep the law perfectly, was pleaded as an exemption, from

the obligation to attempt keeping it at all.

In opposition to this dangerous principle, which exhibited itself under various forms, throughout the period we have been so hastily reviewing, and which was supposed to be latent in the theology of many who disclaimed it as a practical consequence, the pulpit divinity of the subsequent age assumed a more preceptive character, and sometimes appears to have exhibited the morality of the gospel, more prominently than its peculiar doctrines. Whether, in so doing, the gospel principle of salvation by grace, was not occasionally overlooked by individuals, in their zeal to enforce the doctrine of responsibility, I shall not attempt to question; but I apprehend, that the standard divinity of this school, which has come down to us, is not liable to such an objection; and I think you will find the doctrine of salvation by works, under any connection with the presumptuous notion of merit, as distinctly renounced by Tillotson, as by Hooker.

Adieu, my dear friend! my next letter will bring us to the reign of Charles the Second, and (I hope) to the end of this long prefatory review.

Your's most truly.

LETTER XXIII.

PREFATORY SKETCHES RESUMED, — AND CONCLUDED.

PROGRESS OF DISSENTION IN THE CHURCH. — POLITICAL
 DISAFFECTION. — FREEDOM OF THE PREACHERS IN STRIC-
 TURES ON THE GOVERNMENT. — RISE OF SOME FARTHER
 DOCTRINAL PERVERSIONS FROM THIS PERIOD. — DEPRE-
 CIATION OF LEARNING. — TOLERATION OF CROMWELL. —
 FANATICISM. — DEISM. — TWO SCHEMES OF ANTINOMI-
 ANISM. — THE LATTER UNIVERSALLY OPPOSED; — THE
 FORMER MORE PLAUSIBLE, AND COUNTENANCED BY SOME
 RESPECTABLE AUTHORITIES. — INFLUENCE OF THESE CIR-
 CUMSTANCES, ON THE DIVINITY OF THE FOLLOWING PERIOD.
 — RESTORATION. — RISE OF INFIDELITY. — ADVANTAGE
 TAKEN OF THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINES, TO INCUPLICATE
 ATHEISM AND FATALISM. — CONSEQUENT ENCOURAGE-
 MENT OF THE ARMINIAN PRINCIPLES IN THE CHURCH. —
 CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I PURPOSELY avoid the political details con-
 nected with the gloomy period of our his-
 tory, when a fierce and undistinguishing fana-
 ticism overthrew at once the Church and
 the monarchy of England,—and, despising
 alike the tenaciousness of the prelatist, and
 the scruples of the nonconformist, and in-

sensible to the motives of conscience by which either might have been actuated, involved them both in one common proscription. It is foreign to our subject to trace the excesses of civil discord, and sectarian extravagance ; “ which all began,” says Baxter, “ in unwarrantable separation, and too much aggravating the faults of the churches, and common people, and common prayer-book, and ministry.”

While we cannot but perceive, that many of these results may be traced to the scruples of our earlier Puritans, and to the pertinacity with which their successors exaggerated their objections, and enforced their demands, we must in justice distinguish these men with a very mitigated censure, who were first the dupes, and afterwards the victims, of the ambition and hypocrisy of others ; — who, in departing from the discipline of the Church, professed at least an adherence to her doctrines ; and, in resisting the encroachments of the

government, laboured for reformation, but not for subversion.

How long these pure and patriotic motives continued to operate, is another question; and one, which I fear cannot be answered to the credit of the demagogues of the long parliament, nor of many of the ardent and intemperate ministers, who abused the freedom of the pulpit to the propagation of sedition, and from this privileged sanctuary, at once attacked the civil and religious institutions of their country, and directed the arm of popular vengeance, against those individuals in the Church or state, who were the objects of their personal jealousy or displeasure.

From this unhappy period, we must date the origin of many new perversions of doctrine, against which the scope of much of our subsequent divinity is directed; and to the practice of combining political with scriptural subjects in preaching, which originated in Scotland at the time of the Reformation,

and was too soon adopted by our nonconformists at home, we may trace the gradual desecration of the pulpit, till it became too often the instrument of a faction, or the organ of an arbitrary government.

From this observation you will suppose that I exempt, much excellent practical preaching, by those lights of the Church, both Episcopal and Presbyterian, who are still cited as models and authorities ; and who, except their disagreement upon the question of Church discipline, and the discrepancy in their views of predestination and free will, appear to have had little difference of opinion. Your charge of a dereliction of fundamental doctrines, does not, however, extend to these divines ; some of whom, on the contrary, you cite as examples of a sounder style of preaching, than that of their successors.

It is here, therefore, that we must bring into view, some of those religious perversions, which arose during the progress of Cromwell's usurpation ; and which retained

their baneful operation upon the morals and temper of the people, long after they were divested of their political influence, by the re-establishment of a regular government.

We cannot notice all the variety of these perversions, in the ephemeral sects which disturbed this period ; but we may trace the origin of most of them, to the depreciation of all human learning, as derogatory to the supreme authority of Scripture, (which was the popular doctrine of the Independents,) — and afterwards, the subordination of Scripture itself to a pretended internal light, illuminating the mind of the believer, — which naturally led to a contempt of all regular ministry in the Church, transformed every fanatic into a prophet, and made way for the wildest delusions of enthusiasm, under the presumption, or the pretence, of spiritual influence and inspiration.

While Cromwell continued to hold the supreme authority, all these extravagances met with full indulgence ; and the Episcopal

Church alone was excepted, from the general toleration which was extended to all other religious professions. During this period of anarchy, various denominations of enthusiasts arose ; some of them hostile to all human government, and expecting the sudden appearance of Christ upon earth, to establish a new and exclusive dominion, — some, limiting their systems to religious innovation ; — some, distinguishing themselves only by the singularities of mysticism, — and others, by scruples as to the mode and form of administering the Christian ordinance of Baptism.

Amongst the separatists from the Church at this time, we must include the Quakers, and English Baptists. The latter appear to have been generally moderate, both in practice and opinion, though some instances of individual extravagance are recorded ; but the high and visionary enthusiasm of the early Quakers, exhibits a singular contrast to the calm and sober character of their successors. To the principles of both sects, however, we may trace many allusions in

the preachers of the following period; and must consequently allow something for their influence upon the national theology.

We must also keep in view, the rise of speculative infidelity, which is to be referred nearly to the same date. Towards the close of Cromwell's usurpation, a few strong and sceptical minds, disgusted with the general perversion of Scripture, which was pleaded in defence of every enormity of practice and extravagance of opinion, and unhappily neglecting to distinguish religion from its abuses, — precipitately rejected both, and attempted to build a system of morals, upon the foundation of reason and philosophy alone.

But the most prominent error of this time, was the profligate doctrine of Antinomianism; which grounded a licentious freedom of action, upon the doctrine of justification by faith, and claimed a privilege for sin, upon the presumption of personal election; defending its enormities

upon the plea of natural corruption, and maintaining, with a blasphemous perversion of Scripture, that to the pure all things are pure, even things forbidden.

The propagators of this pernicious system, who all embraced the Calvinistic doctrine of the decrees, in its highest rigour, seem to have been divided into two classes :—the former, more plausible and popular, and apparently less hostile to the purity of Christian morals ; the latter, avowedly rejecting every moral restraint, upon the presumption, that no violation of the divine law is imputed as a sin to the elect, whose essential and distinctive character it is, that they cannot do any thing that is displeasing to God, or subversive of the certain and irreversible decree, which from all eternity, has secured their salvation.

Against this last and most profligate scheme, all pious Christians united in opposition ; but the former, by its apparent connection with the doctrine of justification by faith, and the certainty of the divine pro-

mises, obtained some able as well as virtuous advocates, and seems to have partly led to that indistinct and incautious statement, of the necessity of faith, as the sole requisite for salvation, and the gratuitous character of the Christian covenant,—against the abuse of which it was afterwards found necessary to guard, by dwelling more emphatically on the moral precepts of the Gospel.

The opposition to these various errors, we trace in the Divinity of the following period, in some of the particulars to which you have objected. The application of human reason and learning, to the understanding and elucidation of religious truth, and the necessity of a competent share of both, to form the character of a Christian instructor, are urged*, to confute the presumptuous self-sufficiency which would infer its own infallibility from the acknowledged infallibility of Scripture:—and the arrogant assertion of a special illumination, superseding, not only

* By many Divines, Hammond especially.

the exercise of reason, but even the authority of Scripture itself, is evidently glanced at, in many of those discourses in which the nature and extent of the divine teaching, are either incidentally or directly explained.

In opposition to the doctrine of Antinomianism, that worst of poisons to the moral constitution,—which was extracted, plausibly at least, if not quite logically, from the strong and unmodified statement of justification by faith only,—the writers of this period appear to have been led to the more emphatical enforcement of moral obedience; and to have sometimes used depreciatory language, in speaking of a simple and inoperative belief, which has been understood as if intended to apply to the evangelical doctrine of justification,—a doctrine, which they strenuously maintained on other occasions, and especially in their controversies with Popery.

Amongst the various proofs of providential wisdom, which occur to the pious stu-

dent of history, it has always appeared to me, worthy of admiration, that the principle and spirit of religious toleration and charity, should have grown out of the intolerance and bigotry of this period; and that the very men, who afterwards laboured so zealously for the restoration and pacification of the Church, should have been trained under the auspices of that government, by which it had been so arbitrarily subverted:—that those members of the universities, who succeeded the Episcopalians violently ejected by the parliament, should have become, as it were, the founders of a school, so entirely at variance with the narrow and exclusive tenets, in which they had been educated,—and in which, it appears that many of them sincerely acquiesced, till the experience of the various calamities, that flowed from the angry discussion of those deep and recondite questions, led them to turn away from a controversy, which it appeared could hardly be pursued without a sacrifice of Christian charity,—and, if not to modify or abandon their sentiments, at least to hold them as points of private opinion, and in-

dependent of the essential doctrines of the Gospel.

This moderate system, adopted by some of those eminent divines who received preferment at the Restoration, gradually assumed a character more decidedly Arminian, as the course of opposition to various moral or doctrinal perversions, led to a free examination of the tenets of Calvinism, and a fuller perception of their liability to abuse; and it is possible that this character was still farther defined and strengthened, after the exclusion of many Calvinists from the Church, by the act of uniformity.

But we must advert more particularly to another circumstance, which gave a new character, and sometimes almost a new subject, to the theology of this period, and exhibited our divines, not merely as the expositors of Gospel faith, and the advocates of Gospel morality, but as the champions of natural religion, and the defenders of those great truths, which appear to be

deducible by human reason, from the constitution of created nature.

In one of my former letters, I observed that our early reformers were not called to any public contest with Atheism, and were, consequently, at liberty to exert all their strength, in opposition to the corruptions of religion: and to this circumstance, I apprehend it is attributable, that the truths of natural religion (as it is called) are not controversially brought forward in their writings, but are, as it were, tacitly assumed, as acknowledged and unquestionable principles.

But this state of things was not of long continuance. Bolder speculators arose, who, under the pretence of distinguishing the religion of nature from that of revelation, and bringing men back to the examination of first principles, artfully discredited all revealed truths and positive institutions, as uncertain in their evidence, and arbitrary in their object,—asserted the sufficiency, universality,

and perfection, of natural religion,—and attempted to frame a system of Deism; discarding all express revelation as unnecessary, and yet retaining some of those fundamental truths, for the knowledge of which it appears that we are indebted to express revelation alone.

Upon this scheme, others advanced still farther, and conducted their opposition to Christianity, upon principles subversive of all moral intercourse between man and his creator, and leading to a system of practical Atheism, though covered with the decency of a verbal acknowledgment of an abstract and philosophical Deity.

These pernicious principles seem to have acquired new influence, towards the close of the civil wars, from the disgust naturally conceived at the hypocritical or fanatical excesses which disgraced that period; and though the popular profession of religion was still high, and generally sincere, many who aspired to the character of philosophers, appear to have discarded all belief of reve-

lation, and to have retained no more of the profession of it, than decency exacted, or authority enforced.

In the violent revulsion of habits and opinions, which took place upon the Restoration, the jealousy of the religious fanaticism of the former period, was generally identified with a jealousy of religion itself. The careless profligacy of Charles, encouraged a neglect of the duties, and even of the decencies, of morality ; and the ideas of Puritanism and of piety, were associated by the monarch and his favourites, as topics of suspicion or of ridicule. The peculiar doctrines, which had been so vehemently controverted in the late reign, without any question of the fundamental truths of religion, were now brought forward in a new and extraordinary combination with the principles of infidelity. The doctrine of necessity was confidently advanced, upon the presumption of Scripture authority, with the insidious view of discrediting all moral or religious obligation ; and human depravity was asserted in the strongest

terms, for the purpose of grounding upon it the pernicious inference, that man is naturally, and even warrantably, subject to no law but that of selfishness. All moral distinctions of good and evil were denied, or resolved into the conventional regulations of society ; and a conscientious reference to any standard of duty, but those of temporal interest and civil authority, was ridiculed as a wild and enthusiastic delusion.

The impiety of this scheme was veiled at first from common observation, by its partial resemblance to the predestinarian doctrine, while its political character secured its acceptance with the arbitrary and licentious Charles ; and the influence and example of the monarch produced their natural effect upon his courtiers, who probably found in the adoption of his sentiments, the best recommendation to his favour.

In this view of the state of opinions in the English court, at the period in question, I think we perceive the origin of that style

of divinity, which has been charged, (hastily, as I apprehend,) with a departure from the doctrine of the Reformation, and a neglect of the foundation of faith, in building up the edifice of morality. It appears that some of those doctrines, which had been at first abused by the Antinomian, to the subversion of moral obligation, were perverted by the Atheist, upon a different principle, to the same purpose, and with still worse effects. Against *each* of these classes, the arguments for human liberty would naturally be urged, as a necessary ground for the enforcement of moral responsibility ; and, as the errors of both, appeared to be built upon a denial of this liberty, it was also to be expected, that it would sometimes be stated without a direct reference to those Scriptural limitations, which it might have appeared unnecessary to notice, as they were not only admitted, but exaggerated, by each of the parties against whom the refutation was directed.

Whether you will admit this as an apology, I know not ; but it seems to me to have

been the cause of much of the loose and general statement of this doctrine, which we find in the writers in question, and also of the occasional reference to heathen examples and authorities, for the enforcement of those principles of morals, which appeared to be deducible even from natural reason.

It is difficult fully to illustrate this subject, without referring to some examples; and I fear that such a reference would demand a larger and more critical examination, than you probably expect, or I can accomplish. Indeed, in looking through some volumes of these discourses, with this particular object, I find the subjects discussed in them, so various, and the line of argument and illustration in each, so dependent on local and circumstantial peculiarities, that it would require almost an historical or biographical analysis of the times, to account for the particular views in which the Christian doctrines are exhibited, and for the occasional prominence

of some of those doctrines, to the apparent depreciation of others.

Yet it will not be an unedifying exercise, to select here a few of the more eminent examples, and to examine them, simply with a reference to their liability to the charge in question.

You will observe, however, that I limit my defence of these divines, to the position, that they have not deserted, either virtually or expressly, the fundamental doctrines of salvation by grace, justification by faith, and remission of sins through the merits of Christ alone; and that these great principles of Scripture and of Protestantism, if they are not always dogmatically urged, are at least assumed as the ground of their moral and preceptive discourses, and are stated explicitly and strongly, in those which are doctrinal and controversial.

Adieu.

LETTER XXIV.

TILLOTSON.

BURNET'S CHARACTER OF ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON'S PREACHING. — SERMONS ON ATHEISM. — CHARACTER AND PLAN OF THESE SERMONS. — SERMONS ON THE ATTRIBUTES. — THEIR PLAN, AND APPARENT OBJECT. — GENTLE TEMPER OF TILLOTSON. — MISCONSTRUCTIONS TO WHICH IT EXPOSED HIM. — SERMONS AGAINST SOCINIANISM. — SELECTION OF DOCTRINAL SERMONS PROPOSED FOR EXAMINATION. — PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL. — REGENERATION. — TILLOTSON'S VIEW OF IT. — REMARKS SUGGESTED BY THE PRESENT CONTROVERSY UPON THIS DOCTRINE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I DARE not encounter, with a critical pen, the gigantic volumes of Tillotson and Barrow; yet it may not be amiss to select from each a few specimens, to illustrate the foregoing observations.

Of Archbishop Tillotson, Burnet says, that “ he was not only the best preacher of the age, but seemed to have brought preaching to perfection:” — that “ his

“ sermons were so well heard and liked,
“ and so much read, that all the nation pro-
“ posed him as a pattern, and studied to
“ copy after him.”

It is not, however, with a reference to the qualities of style and manner, which rendered the sermons of Tillotson so popular, that we are now to consider them;—and, indeed, I am rather inclined to think the style contributes more than is generally supposed, to diminish their popularity at present; as, notwithstanding all its literary excellencies, it is too calm and diffuse upon practical subjects, and too abstract and argumentative upon questions of doctrine, to engage the affections and the conscience with that deep and animating interest, which a simple and authoritative reference to Scripture inspires.

Yet we should not forget, that Tillotson was often called to preach before those who ridiculed all Scripture authority; and that many of his sermons are directed against the Hobbists, and other infidels of his day,

to whom it was necessary first to prove the abstract truth of revelation ; and who would have turned with contempt from a demonstration, built upon the simple assumption of doctrines which they derided, or upon the authority of a record which they denied.

The chief subjects of Tillotson's polemical warfare, were Atheism, Socinianism, Antinomianism, and Popery ; and it is in his opposition to these respectively, that we are to look for the statement of his doctrinal views, and the grounds upon which he supports them.

His friend Bishop Burnet gives a short account of the prevalence of libertine and infidel opinions, which led him first to lay his foundations in the principles of natural religion, and from thence to advance to the proof of Christianity, and of the authenticity of Scripture. “ He saw,” (says the Bishop,) “ with a deep regret, the fatal corruption of this age; while the hypocrisies “ and extravagancies of former times, and “ the liberties and looseness of the present,

“ disposed many to impiety and Atheism ;
“ so he set the whole strength of his
“ thoughts and studies, to withstand the
“ progress that this was making. In order
“ to that, he laboured particularly to bring
“ every thing out of the clearest principles,
“ and to make all men feel the reasonable-
“ ness of the truths, as well as of the pre-
“ cepts, of the Christian religion.”

Upon this plan it appears that he framed many of his discourses, and particularly two sets of consecutive sermons, which occur at a considerable distance, in his works : and to which only, I shall advert, in connection with this part of our subject.

In the collection of sermons published during his life, (which forms the first volume of the folio edition of his works,) we find the first eight directed to the confutation of Atheism, and to the inculcation of religion chiefly upon principles of reason, as likely to be most persuasive with those whom he addressed. In these sermons, he seems to have the opinions of Hobbes particularly in

view, and in the third, he refers expressly to the "Leviathan" of that author, as inculcating doctrines subversive of all moral and religious obligation.

From the demonstration of the truth, he proceeds to a proof of the advantages, of religion, and afterwards goes on to enforce its obligations; and he concludes this series with an animating view of the Christian's hopes and privileges, contrasted with the vanity, uncertainty, and disappointment of all earthly pursuits and enjoyments.

This argument he conducts still upon those rational principles, on which, as addressing a particular class, he had framed his general demonstration; and urges the concluding application, with a reference to the same principles; exhibiting strongly the folly, as well as the guilt, of preferring the evanescent pleasures of this world, to the imperishable glories of eternity.

Yet even here, he builds his reasonings upon the basis of Christianity; and having

first established the truths of natural religion by reason and general testimony, and proved the divine origin and excellence of revelation, by an appeal to its effects, he enforces its obligations with all the zeal of a Christian advocate, and expatiates upon its great and precious promises, with all the energy of devout and joyful anticipation. I cannot resist quoting from the eighth sermon, his description of the happiness of a future state, as illustrative at once of the piety of his heart, and the soundness of his doctrine; and surely enough to vindicate even *these* discourses from the charge of a cold rationality. The whole sermon is animated and beautiful, and, (if you will allow me a popular expression,) truly evangelical.

“ When this blessed society is met together, and thus united by love, they shall all join in gratitude to their great patrons and benefactors; to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain,— to God, even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins

“ in his own blood. And they shall sing
“ everlasting songs of praise to God for all
“ his works of wonder:—for the effects of
“ that infinite goodness, and admirable
“ wisdom, and almighty power, which are
“ clearly seen in the creation and govern-
“ ment of the world, and all the creatures
“ in it:—particularly, for his favours to man-
“ kind; for the benefit of their beings, for
“ the comfort of their lives, and for all his
“ merciful providences towards them in this
“ world:—but, above all, for the redemp-
“ tion of their souls by the death of his Son!
“ —for the free forgiveness of their sins, for
“ the gracious assistance of his Holy Spirit,
“ and for conducting them safely, through
“ all the snares and dangers, the troubles
“ and temptations of this world, to the
“ secure possession of that glory and happi-
“ ness which they shall be partakers
“ of, and for which they are bound to praise
“ God through all eternity! This, this
“ shall be the employment of the blessed
“ spirits above, and these are the chief in-
“ gredients of our happiness, which the

“ Scripture mentions ; and if there were no
“ other — as there may be ten thousand
“ more for any thing I can tell,—yet gener-
“ ous and virtuous minds will easily under-
“ stand, how great a pleasure there is in the
“ improvement of knowledge, and the ex-
“ ercise of love, and in a grateful and per-
“ petual acknowledgement of the greatest
“ benefits that creatures are capable of re-
“ ceiving.’

In his course of sermons upon the divine attributes, (which occurs in the second volume of his works,) he appears also to have had in his eye the speculative infidelity of his time, and to have framed the plan of them accordingly. He takes up the subject in two different views — abstractedly, and relatively ; considering, under the former view, what he calls the incommunicable perfections of the Deity, (as “ his independency and eternity,”) and including in the latter, those perfections which are communicable, and exhibited in the divine dealings with mankind.

In considering the attributes of the Deity abstractedly, he proves them from reason as well as from Scripture, and thus fights the sceptic with the weapons of his own choice. He is led, indeed, in pursuance of this plan, to a frequent reference to the works of Heathen poets and philosophers; but he seems to have used them no otherwise than as Saint Paul does, in the prosecution of a similar argument, and he corroborates and clears their vague and speculative views, by a reference to the authoritative testimony of Scripture.

In considering the attributes of God relatively, or as they are actually displayed in the divine dispensations towards mankind, he argues almost entirely from Scripture principles and evidences. Inferring the perfections of the Deity, from their results, he shows these perfections, first, exhibited in the creation and providential government of the world, and secondly, in the new creation, or redemption of mankind, by Jesus Christ. The former he argues, not only from Scripture, but from the principles of

natural reason, and the traditionary evidence of antiquity. For the latter he refers to Scripture exclusively; and upon the testimony of Revelation alone, develops this mighty mystery, which has made foolish the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing, the understanding of the prudent.

Upon those divine attributes, which were more especially displayed in the work of redemption, — justice and mercy, truth and holiness, patience, long-suffering, and compassion, — he enlarges in a course of moral and practical application; and clearly deduces from them, the corresponding duties to which man is bound, by the acknowledgment of these attributes, and by their influence upon his own welfare and happiness.

“ Goodness,” says he, “ is amiable in
“ itself, though no benefit or advantage
“ should from thence redound to us. But,
“ when we find the comfortable effects of
“ it, — when the *riches* of God’s goodness,
“ and long-suffering, and forbearing are

“ laid out *upon us*,—when we live upon that
 “ goodness, and are indebted to it, for all
 “ that we have, and hope for ;—this is a
 “ much greater endearment to us of that
 “ excellency and perfection, which was
 “ amiable of itself. We can not but love
 “ Him who *is good*, and *does us good* ;
 “ whose goodness extends to all his crea-
 “ tures, but is exercised in so peculiar a
 “ manner towards the sons of men, that it
 “ is called *love* :—and if God vouchsafe to
 “ love us, well may this be the first and
 “ great commandment—thou shalt love
 “ the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and
 “ with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

Upon a similar view of the bearing and
 influence of the other attributes of God, he
 grounds the moral obligations resulting
 from them ; and shows that the imitation
 of these divine perfections, (so far as man's
 corrupt nature, aided by grace, is capable
 of imitating them,) is not only a condition,
 but a necessary qualification, for the happi-
 ness of a future life.

I should observe, that Tillotson has attacked the principles of the self-called philosophers of his time, rather by insinuation, than by direct controversy, as they appeared connected with various other errors, speculative or practical, which occasionally called for his animadversion; and more particularly, as their consequences were exhibited, in the gross and shameless immorality, which was the distinction, and the disgrace, of the reign of Charles the Second.

It is, therefore, necessary to keep these principles in view, in considering the drift of some of his practical discourses; and even in his opposition to the high Calvinistic doctrines, it seems more than probable that he sometimes meant to combat the infidel, who built on those doctrines a system of atheistical fatalism, as well as to confute the Antinomian, who perverted them to the encouragement of sin.

It appears that the gentleness of Archbishop Tillotson's temper, and his anxiety to relieve and conciliate the dissenters, ex-

posed him to the imputation, of a want of zeal for the Church, and of partiality towards those who departed from it. But any who are now inclined to consider this as a reproach, should recollect, that many of those separatists had been his early friends and associates; that their controversy with the Church, related not to essentials; and that, if their scruples were sometimes unreasonable, their piety was eminent, and their doctrine generally orthodox. Now that the irritation of mutual jealousy has subsided, and the remarkable characters of that age have found their level, in a more impartial judgment, the mildness of Tillotson is remembered to his honour; and his friendship for some pious and worthy men, who differed from him in their religious opinions, is not, perhaps, the least interesting part of his character. His panegyric of his friend Mr. Gouge, (an eminent non-conformist divine,) may not improperly be applied to himself. “He was of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all men, allowing others to differ from him, even in opinions that were very dear to

“him; and provided men did but fear God,
“and work righteousness, he loved them
“heartily, how distant soever they were
“from him in judgment, about things less
“necessary.”

But, while this tolerant and catholic spirit led him to regard every pious Christian as a brother, and even to enter into personal intimacy with some, whose judgment differed essentially from his own, the circumstances of the Church during his ministry, engaged him in perpetual controversy; and the difficulties of his warfare were aggravated by the variety of errors with which he had to contend. The arguments for the exercise of reason in religious enquiries, which he urged, to confute the Popish doctrine of the infallibility of the Church, as well as to overthrow the infidel principle, that religion had no foundation but in authority, were objected to, as subverting all belief of mysteries in religion, and leading to the rejection of every Scripture doctrine that lay beyond the reach of the human understanding. The preacher himself did

not escape the imputation that was thrown upon the principles he advocated; and to this calumny, it appears that we are indebted for the publication of his sermons against Socinianism, which he declares that he had “sincerely preached, as he then thought, “and still continued to think, of those “points.” A considerable interval (thirteen years) elapsed, between the preaching and the publication of those discourses, which indeed appeared but the year before his death;—so that we may look upon them as his final tribute to the Church, and his dying declaration of faith in the divinity of his Redeemer.

In these sermons, however, the doctrine of the incarnation is necessarily discussed too polemically, to admit of the practical and personal use of it, which we look for in dogmatical or didactic theology. Many pages are occupied with verbal criticism, necessary to elucidate the extent and meaning of those expressions which relate to our Lord's office and character; proofs are ad-

duced, and objections are refuted, simply to establish the point in dispute; and, if we omit some short applications at the close of each sermon, the whole series may be read in connection as one controversial treatise; and perhaps they contain as good a popular refutation of the Socinian tenets, as is to be found within the same compass in our language.

I will not say that the ingenuity of the preacher, and his compliance with the fashion of the times, have not led him sometimes into digressions, upon the analogies, and probable reasons, of the divine dispensations, more free and speculative than may exactly suit our ideas of the chastised character of Scripture criticism. Yet, we may observe that such discussions were in some degree necessary, to refute the objections, which had been raised upon those very grounds of analogy and probability, against the Gospel scheme of redemption founded on the divinity and atonement of Christ.

I shall take leave of these sermons, as they do not directly apply to our present purpose, with a beautiful apostrophe at the close of the first, which shows that the preacher spoke from his heart, and argued as a Christian, as well as a polemic.

“ Blessed God and Saviour of mankind !
“ what shall we render to thee for such
“ mighty love, for such inestimable benefits
“ as thou hast purchased for us, and art
“ ready to confer upon us ? What shall we
“ say to thee, Oh ! thou preserver and lover
“ of souls, — who wast pleased to assume
“ our mortal nature, on purpose to live
“ amongst us for our instruction, and for our
“ example, — and to lay down thy life for
• “ the redemption of our souls, and for the
“ expiation of our sins, — and to take part
“ of flesh and blood, that thou mightest shed
“ it for our sakes ! What affections should
“ these thoughts raise in us ! what vows and
“ resolutions should they engage us in, of
“ perpetual love, and gratitude, and obe-
“ dience, to thee, the most gracious and
“ most glorious Redeemer of mankind ! ”

But it was not only in the defence of natural religion, or in vindication of the fundamental truths of Christianity, that Tillotson was called upon to exercise his polemical pen. The unhappy disputes upon the doctrine of predestination, which had agitated and divided the Church, for nearly a century, had gradually led to a connection of this doctrine, with other truths of Revelation, more important, because more directly bearing upon the hope of salvation through Christ, and the consequent obligations of the Gospel. Opinions had been deduced from it, inconsistent with the truths, (evident equally from Scripture and experience,) of the free agency and responsibility of man; and it had been even made the foundation of a system of practical licentiousness, utterly subversive of that holiness and purity, so essential to the Christian character, and so explicitly prescribed by the Christian religion.

It is against this last and most destructive perversion, that many of the doctrinal sermons of Tillotson are directed; and.

even, where he argues more generally against absolute predestination, as a point of merely speculative opinion, he seldom loses sight of the practical abuses which appear to have arisen from it; though he honourably acquits the great majority of its advocates, from the charge of inculcating or encouraging such abuses.

With this observation in view, let us just glance at a few of his sermons upon the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; which, I apprehend, he neither abandons nor modifies,—though he labours to separate them from those deep speculations into the secrets of the Divine counsels, which characterized much of the theology of the preceding period, and which can seldom be pursued to any extent, without sacrificing the simplicity of Scriptural truth, to the pride of metaphysical acuteness, or hazarding the destruction of personal humility and charity, by a partial and arbitrary application, of the promises and privileges of the Gospel.

In the sermon "On the Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ," which follows those upon the incarnation, the doctrine is still argued polemically ; but the expiatory nature of the sacrifice is asserted in its fullest extent : — " That the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of sin, suffered in our stead, and bore the wrath of God *for us* ; and made a perfect atonement for sin, and obtained for us eternal redemption : " — " That Christ died *for us*, and for our sins ; that he was a sacrifice for us, and a propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; that is, of all mankind : " — " That he bore our sins in his own body, on the tree, and appeared, to take away sin, by the sacrifice of himself : " — " That we are justified by his blood, and redeemed with the price of it. " — " And this (he adds) is so evidently the scope and meaning of these expressions, that it cannot be denied, without offering the greatest violence to the Holy Scriptures. "

The practical use of this great doctrine is briefly, but strongly, inculcated in the

conclusion ; but it is more prominent, in some of the preceptive discourses, where it is urged as the highest incentive to holiness, and indeed as the ground of all Christian obligation.

I shall now select a few of the sermons, whose titles may lead to some doctrinal references, connected more particularly with your observations ; and, without attempting any regular abstract or analysis, I shall merely cite from them some passages illustrative of my general position.

In two sermons, “ Upon the Nature and Influences of the Promises of the Gospel,” 2 Peter, chap. i. verse 4., these “ great and precious promises” are stated as follows :

First, the promise of the free pardon and forgiveness of our sins, upon our faith and repentance :—

Second, the promise of God’s grace and Holy Spirit to assist our obedience :—
and,

Third, the promise of eternal life to reward it.

The mercy of God, and the merits and sacrifice of Christ, are acknowledged as the sole foundation of these promises, and the grace of the Gospel is represented as the only medium of salvation.

The tenor of these promises is next considered; and their conditional character asserted, in opposition to the doctrine of absolute promises and irrespective predestination, against which the general argument of these sermons is directed. The promise of pardon is only to be laid hold on, by a sincere faith and repentance; the grace of God is to be earnestly solicited, though (says the preacher) it does often prevent and stimulate the solicitation; and eternal life, (the fruition of the two first,) is to be sought by repentance, faith, and perseverance (under the grace of God) in good works.

I give you this summary of the doctrine in these sermons, as expressing, (in my view,)

the doctrine of the Reformation; but we shall find passages more apposite to our purpose, in the sermons on regeneration, faith, grace, and gospel obedience.

The object of the sermons “On the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration,” is sufficiently expressed in their title; and the total change of heart and life, which the spirit of the Gospel requires and produces, is strongly and scripturally exhibited. The term is explained in its various senses, and afterwards loosely and promiscuously used, to express the origin, the process, or the effect, of that great transformation of character, described by a metaphor so remarkable.

We have often lamented together, the injury to practical religion, which has arisen from treating this doctrine controversially; and the obscurity in which it has been involved, by a neglect of precision in the expression of it. Even in these sermons, notwithstanding their general merit, we find this same want of precise definition

and application, to which I adverted in a former letter, as tending generally to embarrass doctrinal discussions, and to create an appearance of opposition, where no real or essential difference exists ; and I venture to make this remark upon them, merely to show, that if so acute a reasoner can be made apparently to differ from himself, by applying the same phrase in different senses, a similar variation in the use of it by others, (each understanding it in his own sense only,) may produce an appearance of discrepancy in opinion, which a mutual explanation, or the substitution of another form of expression, would probably remove.

In the opening sermon, regeneration is considered, not as the implantation of the principle of spiritual life, by the power of the Holy Ghost, but as the change of character, consequent upon it. It is used synonymously with repentance, conversion, renovation, and sanctification ; and is stated rather as a condition required, than as a privilege conferred, by the Gospel. Yet this change of character the preacher as-

cribes expressly, to the operation of a Divine Power, “ of the same kind with “ that which created the world, and raised “ up Jesus Christ from the dead ;” though he controverts the opinions (drawn from the metaphorical term regeneration,) of irresistible grace, instantaneous conversion, and the absolute passiveness of the creature in the process.

Grace (he admits) may be, and sometimes is, but is not generally, irresistible ; “ and though this grace is the foundation “ of all that is good in us, the different improvement of it, occasions the difference “ of our attainments in grace and goodness ;”—and the neglect or abuse of it, may incur its final forfeiture.

Under this latter view, the same term is used, to express the Divine operation and agency, which had been before applied to the effect ; and regeneration is made the spring and principle of conversion and sanctification, with which it had been rather loosely identified. I should not

venture to notice an inaccuracy, in a writer so eminently above my criticism, but that I think it confirms what I have elsewhere said, of the controversy on baptismal regeneration ; and proves, that much of the jealousy entertained of this doctrine, has arisen from a generality in the statement of it, and an application of the same expression, to designate the spiritual principle, and its results. In either of these senses, as used in the passages I have noticed, and, indeed, throughout the sermons under this title, it can have no reference to the sacrament of baptism ; but is stated on the contrary, as a subsequent and sensible, and, 'in some degree, a voluntary, change ; the rectified will of the renewed creature, consenting to the Divine suggestions, and co-operating (if we may so speak) with the grace of God.

In confirmation of this view, regeneration is explained, as strictly synonymous with sanctification, and descriptive, not only of the original transformation, but of the perseverance and progress in holiness, which

mark the character of the renewed Christian. The evidences and results of the principle of grace, are identified with the principle itself; and, while this principle is maintained to be virtually the sole cause of regeneration and conversion, the saving change is not supposed to be accomplished, till it becomes manifest in its effects, and after many struggles and conflicts with sin, the power of Divine grace is exhibited, in a signal and effectual reformation. When this is done, and not before, the man is said to be regenerate. But while it was yet in progress, “the new man was forming, and “the work of regeneration was going on; “and it was perhaps a very considerable “time, from the first beginning of it, till it “came to a fixed and settled state.”

Such, in a few words, is the statement of the doctrine contained in these sermons; referring, not so much to the Divine act of the new creation, as to the consequent effect, in the renovation of the creature, and guarding, apparently, against that indolent and passive dependence upon the grace

of God, which the notion of its effectual and irresistible operation (independent of human exertion,) was likely to produce.

As the Gospel allows no credit to repentance, without its corresponding fruits, and promises no salvation to faith that is not made perfect by love, the preacher admits no evidence of regeneration, but an earnest endeavour to be conformed to that image, in which, by the Divine power, we are renewed. Whether the vital principle may exist, without any visible fruit; whether it may be latent, and for a time inoperative, he does not here enquire. Of the results only, he speaks: and it is evident, that by the results only, we can rationally judge of our participation of the privilege, as effectual to our future salvation.

Nothing can be apparently more at variance with this statement of the doctrine, than that which represents regeneration, as the spiritual grace of baptism; in which, it is obvious that the term must be used, to designate the *communication* of the principle

exclusively ; and this communication must be understood as leaving its fruition still contingent. Now, if it appear that Tillotson has used the term in another place, in direct reference to baptism, I think we can only reconcile this discrepancy, by allowing such a variety as I have supposed, in the application of it.

I shall only specify two passages in his works, (from the 62d and 67th sermons,) in one of which, he states expressly the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and in the other guards and defines it by the very limitation which I have suggested.

In the 67th sermon (upon the danger of apostacy,) referring to the case of those “ who were once enlightened, and have “ tasted of the heavenly gift, and were “ made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” he says, “ These expressions seem to denote “ the spiritual benefits and graces of the “ Holy Ghost, conferred upon Christians by “ baptism; *particularly regeneration*, (which

“is the proper work of the Holy Ghost,) and justification, and remission of sins.”

In another place (sermon 62.) he defines this grace more precisely ; and *limits* it, to the communication of that spiritual aid, by which we are brought into a capacity for evangelical obedience, and a hope of future salvation. “ We (says he) who are Christians, have received that grace in baptism, by which our natures are so far healed, as, if we be not wanting to ourselves, and do not neglect the means which God hath appointed, we may mortify our lusts, and lead a new life.” — “ But if, instead of mortifying and subduing the evil propensions of our nature, we will cherish, and give new life and power to them, we forfeit the grace which we received in baptism, and bring ourselves again under the power and dominion of sin.”

And this, I apprehend, is all that the assertors of baptismal regeneration generally mean, by their statement of the doctrine :

and I cannot but think, that many of the dangerous positions connected with it, arise from the application of the term, to express, what may be better called the *fruits* of regeneration. Bishop Beveridge, one of the great champions of the doctrine, marks the distinction very clearly; and, as far as I know, most of our divines who have maintained it, are equally careful to guard against any interpretation that can lead to a delusive security. It is unnecessary to recur to the period, when this doctrine first became a subject of dispute in our Church; but you know that the passages referring to it in the Liturgy, were objected to by the non-conformist divines at the Restoration; and Bishop Beveridge speaks of it, as a controversy of recent origin.

I have been tempted to recur to this subject, because it has unhappily been made a question of party, upon which polemical jealousy on either side has fastened, as a test of general orthodoxy; and because I think the doctrine has been particularly obscured, by an arbitrary connexion with others.

Its practical tendency has been objected to, as calculated to lower the spiritual standard of Christianity ; and its principle has been controverted, as subversive of the fundamental doctrine of human corruption, or at least greatly diminishing its extent, and the consequent necessity of the Divine influence for its removal. It must, indeed, be confessed, that these results would follow, from connecting regeneration, in its full and final effects, with the ordinance of baptism : but such does not appear to be the intention of the advocates of this doctrine ; and I believe few of its opponents, have proposed a higher standard of Christianity, than is to be found in the writings of Taylor and Beveridge.

For myself, my dear friend, (I must for your satisfaction state my own opinion,) I will confess that I think the polemical discussion of this doctrine, has involved it in difficulties upon both sides, which do not embarrass those, who receive it in the simple enunciation of Scripture ; and that I hold it a point of more importance, practi-

cally to apply and improve the Divine grace, whenever and however conferred, than curiously to define its extent, or captiously to debate about the period of its communication.

The length of this letter has exceeded my calculation, and, I fear, will exhaust your patience. I shall therefore defer, till my next, the observations which I propose to make upon the other sermons I have specified.

Yours, most affectionately.

LETTER XXV.

TILLOTSON.

TILLOTSON'S DOCTRINE OF FAITH. — ORIGIN OF FAITH. —
 CONSISTENCY OF DIVINE INFLUENCE WITH MORAL LIBER-
 TY. — OBJECTS OF FAITH STATED. — EFFECTS OF FAITH
 UPON THE CHARACTER AND LIFE. — OBSERVATIONS. —
 INSTRUMENTALITY OF FAITH TOWARDS SALVATION. —
 JUSTIFICATION. — WHAT FAITH IT IS THAT JUSTIFIES. —
 PARALLEL OF TILLOTSON AND BAXTER, ON THIS POINT.
 — TILLOTSON'S DOCTRINE FREE FROM PRESUMPTION. —
 CONDITIONS. — FAITH, A CONDITION. — THE NOTION OF
 CONDITIONS, NOT DEROGATORY FROM THE GRACE OF THE
 GOSPEL. — DOCTRINE OF GRACE. — EXTREMES. — SCRIP-
 TURAL STATEMENT OF TILLOTSON. — FULL ACKNOW-
 LEDGEMENT OF HUMAN CORRUPTION. — UNION WITH
 CHRIST, THE ONLY SOURCE OF DIVINE GRACE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SHALL resume, without farther preface,
 the subject of my last letter, and endeavour
 to trace briefly, Tillotson's doctrine of faith,
 as to its origin, its objects, its effects, and
 the degree of its instrumentality towards
 our justification.

We find, in the third volume of his works, a course of sermons upon this subject, extending, under various titles, from the 165th to the 193d. I shall only touch upon two or three of them, as connected with our present enquiry.

After a discourse upon the nature of faith, too abstract and general for our purpose, but containing much excellent matter, and three sermons on "Religious Faith," or the belief of Divine Revelation, we come to one, on "the Testimony of the Spirit to the truth of the Gospel;" in which the author defines the belief of it as "a Divine faith," "not only in respect to the object of it, and the argument whereby it is wrought, and the effect of it, but likewise in respect to the author and efficient of it, which is the Divine Spirit."

Under the latter view, which is applicable to the subject of our enquiry, he expressly asserts his belief, that "this faith does not become an abiding and effectual persuasion in any person, without the special

“operation of the Holy Ghost;” and he states one effect of this operation, to be “the furthering and helping forward the efficacy of this persuasion, upon our hearts and lives, in the first work of conversion and regeneration, and in the progress of sanctification afterwards; both which, the Scripture doth every where attribute to the Spirit of God, as the author and efficient cause.”

So much may suffice, as evidence of his judgement, as to the origin of religious faith, and the work of the spirit, in awakening and improving it. A merely speculative belief of Christianity, he honours not with the name, but urges it as an aggravation of the responsibility of those, who are contented to rest in it.

It is unnecessary to follow him in his disquisition, upon the consistency of this divine influence upon the will, with the doctrine of moral liberty, and the allowableness (under a due sense of this influence) of the exercise of reason, in religion. But we

cannot here read, without interest, his allusion to the case of Chillingworth, whom he vindicates from the reproach of Socinianism ; from which, indeed, that great man seems to have sufficiently vindicated himself, not only by an express and solemn disavowal, in one of his controversial papers, but by the epithets applied to the doctrines of that sect, in one of his sermons.*

The “object” of this faith, is next described : — first, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of a future retribution, which the preacher includes, consistently with his general plan, under the head of natural religion ; and, secondly, the truth of the revelation contained in the Scriptures, but especially the doctrine of the Gospel, distinguished by

* The fifth ; — which is worth reading, on many other accounts ; and particularly, for the caution with which he treats the predestinarian doctrine, while he argues against the prevalent abuses of it. It is singular enough, that Chillingworth’s reputation should have suffered in his own time, by the malice of his popish opponents, and at a later period, by the insidious praise of Gibbon.

the epithet of the Christian faith; “the firm
“belief of which, is,” (he says,) “by way
of eminence, usually called *faith*, in the
New Testament.”

The proposition, which is the subject of
this faith, he states in the words of St. John :
“These things are written, that ye might
“believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son
“of God; and that believing, ye might
“have life through his name.”

In the belief “that Jesus is the Christ,”
he comprehends the “belief, of his divinity
“and incarnation, of the merit and satis-
“faction of his death and sufferings, to ap-
“pease the offended justice of God, and
“reconcile him to mankind, and to pur-
“chase for them, the pardon of their sins,
“and eternal life, upon condition of faith,
“repentance, and sincere obedience :” —
and in this belief, he further includes “the
“hope of salvation, from no other but
“Christ alone,” — “as a teacher and a sa-
“viour, a sacrifice and propitiation, a legis-
“lator and a sovereign.”

I have been obliged to collect these propositions, as they lie scattered in two or three sermons, and interspersed with other matter; and I have omitted many equally strong, but only corroborative of those here cited. The references to Scripture, in these sermons, are particularly selected, with a view to inculcate the belief in Christ, as a Saviour; and this article is stated (both here and in other discourses,) as the fundamental principle of Christianity.

We now proceed to the “effects” of this faith, or the influence which it is likely to produce; upon the lives of those who receive it.

The necessary and genuine effect of this faith, in the authority and doctrine of Christ, is a sincere conformity to his precepts. — “And hence” (says the preacher) “it is, that true Christians, who did fashion their lives according to the Gospel, are called *believers*; and the sum of all Christianity is usually contained in this word, *believing*, which is the great prin-

“ ciple of a Christian life:” — “ for none are
“ truly said to believe in Christ, who do
“ not shew forth the proper and genuine
“ effects of this faith, who do not live as
“ they believe, and conform their lives to
“ that doctrine, to the truth whereof they
“ profess an assent.”

Many of the arguments and observations in the earlier sermons of this series, are evidently framed under a supposition, that the preacher was addressing a sceptical audience; and on this view, the foundation is laid in a prefatory disquisition, upon the nature of faith, its influence as a principle of action, and its application to natural religion; the proofs of which, are argued upon the evidence of reason, tradition, universal consent, and the obvious marks of beneficence, power, and wisdom, displayed in the works of the visible creation.

I know that you object to such a course, as foreign to the great object of pulpit instruction; and I should, perhaps, agree with you in your objection, if all congrega-

tions were speculatively, as well as nominally, Christian. Yet, as the professing world is now constituted, I am not sure that such general and prefatory information is not, in many congregations, beneficial, as an antidote to the sophistry, which infidelity is ever ready to suggest, and against which, (under the divine grace,) a firm impression of these primary truths, affords the best security. “He that cometh to God,” says the apostle, “must believe that he is, “and that he is the rewarder of them that “diligently seek him.”

To this very course, we find the excellent Baxter resorting, in the endeavour to establish his own faith, under a temptation to infidelity. “He blamed himself” (says his biographer, Calamy,) “for so long neglecting the well settling of his foundations, “while he spent so much time about the “superstructure. But he would be now no “longer satisfied; and set himself to examine the reasons of his faith, that it “might be, indeed, his own.” — “and in

“ the storm of this temptation, it proved a
“ great assistance to his faith, that the
“ being and attributes of God were so clear
“ to him.”

You must not conclude, from these remarks, that I am an admirer of abstract reasoning, in the pulpit. I would only suggest, that there may be circumstances, to make it not only allowable, but necessary ; and that the preacher, who would imitate the apostle, in becoming all things to all men, for the more effectual accomplishment of his mission, must sometimes use this weapon to pioneer the way, to his more evangelical and authoritative demonstrations.

To these we proceed, in reviewing the last division, in which I proposed to consider Tillotson's doctrine of faith ; viz. its instrumentality towards our justification and salvation.

The Christian faith, which, according to the doctrine laid down in these sermons,

justifies, sanctifies, and saves, is stated to include the four points following:—

First, an assent of the understanding to the divine mission, character, and authority of Christ :

Secondly, an assent of the understanding to all the truths which he has revealed in his word :

Thirdly, a reliance and dependence upon him, and upon no other, for conferring the benefits, and performing the promises, set before us in the Gospel :

Fourthly, obedience to all his laws and commands ; which, if we do not obey, we are presumed to disbelieve ; for, if we did truly and heartily believe them to be the commands of God, we should obey them.

To prove that obedience is included in the Scripture notion of faith, or at least uniformly stated as the fruit of it, many strong texts are adduced ; and this doctrine

is urged, in opposition to the Solifidian, or rather Antinomian principles, against which the general argument in these sermons is directed.

The doctrine of justification is here largely discussed, and the distinction, of initial and final justification, adopted by the preacher. Your judgment of the soundness of his argument, must depend upon your previous view of the subject ; but to my apprehension, the statement is clear from the charge of legality ; and the gratuitous character of the Gospel covenant, is fully vindicated in the assertion, that “faith” (a lively influential faith,) “is the whole and
“entire condition required in the Gospel,
“of our pardon ; upon the performance of
“which, God hath promised to pardon
“sin.”

This faith is again stated to include “an
“assent to the truth of the Gospel, a trust
“and confidence in Christ as our only
“Saviour, repentance from dead works,
“and sincere obedience and holiness of
“life.”

It is obvious, that the three first only, can be urged, as requisite to the present pardon and justification of the sinner ; but the last, as the necessary fruit of repentance, and evidence of sincere conversion of heart, is as strongly insisted on, by the advocates for justification by faith only, in what is called the evangelical sense, as by those who are supposed to state the condition more generally. I say supposed,—because I really think there is very little difference of opinion, if the parties would mutually agree to define their expressions precisely, and to use them in the same sense ; or if each would allow, that those who dissent from them, may honestly aim at the same conclusion, though their judgment, or their prejudices, should lead to it, by a different process.

This notion of faith, as including good works, virtually towards pardon, and actually towards final salvation, is so distinctly stated by Baxter, (whose authority I know you respect,) that I cannot resist quoting his doctrine, as corroborative of

Tillotson's judgment, and (if I may speak so presumptuously,) of my own. The passage is to be found in his declaration of the sense in which he subscribed the articles of the Church, and refers to the eleventh:—

“ Though he that *doeth* righteousness is
“ righteous, and the Scripture throughout,
“ and frequently, mentioneth an *inherent*,
“ and *personal* righteousness, necessary to
“ salvation, yet this is no universal right-
“ eousness, nor such as will justify us ac-
“ cording to the law of innocency or works;
“ but is merely *subordinate* to the merit
“ and efficacy of the sacrifice and righteous-
“ ness of Christ, *which only, meriteth for us*
“ *as a price*; our faith being only the re-
“ quisite (yet given) moral qualification, for
“ the reception of the free gift of pardon,
“ justification, and adoption, and hath not
“ the least part of the office or honour of
“ Christ. Yet are Christ's words true, that
“ by men's *works* they shall be justified, or
“ condemned, and all men shall be judged
“ according to their *works*: and James truly
“ saith, that by works, a man is justified,

“ and not by faith only : — not by works of
 “ perfection, or of Moses’s law, nor *any*,
 “ that as a *price* or *commutation*, do make
 “ the reward to be of debt, and not of
 “ grace ; — but, by a practical faith, or
 “ Christianity, — such *acts*, as faith itself is,
 “ and prove our belief — such, as Christ
 “ has promised justification and salvation to,
 “ — such, as by justifying belief to be sincere,
 “ do justify the person against the charge of
 “ infidelity, hypocrisy, impenitence, and
 “ ungodliness. *Christianity* is that faith,
 “ which Paul opposes to works.”

Here is not a word of that justification before *men*, which some have understood St. James to intend by this illustration. The whole of the evangelical system, including belief and practice, is proposed as the condition, of the promised justification and salvation ; and the doctrine of St. Paul is epitomized, in the single, but comprehensive word, “ Christianity.”

Now, I really believe that many good Christians, who suppose themselves to dif-

fer upon this weighty question, are as nearly agreed as Tillotson and Baxter ; and I cannot but lament the prejudice, which, by classing them under different denominations, seems to give Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, the pre-eminence which belongs only to Christ, and precludes many, from Christian fellowship and friendship with each other, who are earnestly labouring in the same cause, and acting (in the main) upon the same principles.

I shall not, here, enter into the distinction which has been made, between faith, as including, and as producing, good works, farther than to observe, that it seems little more than a verbal difference. The principle which necessarily produces any effect, may be said virtually to include it ; and I believe, few have inferred more from this expression, than those who most object to it, will admit, viz. that “faith, if it hath not works, is dead ;” and that it is not a mere assent to the truth, but a cordial submission to the authority and obligations of the Gospel, that will be available towards

justification, whether considered as initial, or effectual and final.

That Tillotson held his doctrine of faith, as including obedience, in complete separation from the presumptuous notion of merit, the following passage will abundantly prove; and may, indeed, supersede the necessity of any farther vindication of him, on this head.

“ The apostle, in the Epistle to the Romans, doth not only dispute against those, who simply contended for justification by the legal dispensation, but were fallen also into the gross error or mistake, that they did *merit* pardon or justification at God’s hand; which is *impossible*; for pardon is *free*, and of *grace*, or else it is not pardon.” Therefore, the apostle asserts, that we are so justified by faith, *that neither our assent to the Gospel, nor our obedience to the commands of it, do merit this at God’s hands.* For this would directly contradict justification by the faith of the Gospel: — for, how can

“ any man possibly think that he *merits*
“ pardon, by his believing and obeying the
“ Gospel, when this is part of the Gospel
“ which we believe, that Christ died for
“ our sins, and purchased our pardon at so
“ dear a rate? which had been very unjust,
“ if we could have done any thing to have
“ merited it.

I have already observed, that the conditional character of the Gospel covenant is as fully established, by the requisition of faith, as the indispensable preliminary of justification, as it could be by the claim of the strictest legal obedience, supposing man capable of the performance. The consistency of the imposition of conditions, with free grace, as well as the entire exclusion of any natural merit in the performance of them, is well expressed in the following passage, with which I shall conclude our extracts from these discourses.

“ God’s grace in pardoning a sinner, is
“ said to be free, not because it is not sus-
“ pended upon any condition, for the

“ Scripture tells us plainly, that it is upon
“ the condition of faith, and repentance,
“ and forgiving others, and the like; but,
“ it is free, because God was pleased
“ freely to give his Son, to die for our sins,
“ and to accept of his sacrifice for the ex-
“ piation of them, and to impose easy and
“ reasonable conditions upon us, in order
“ to our enjoyment of this benefit, — and,
“ upon such conditions, though they have
“ *nothing* of virtue or merit, of any natural
“ or moral efficacy, to deserve or procure
“ such a benefit as the pardon of our sins,
“ hath vouchsafed, for the sake of his Son,
“ whom he gave to be a ransom for us, to
“ receive us to grace and mercy. And I
“ think this is abundantly enough, to make
“ our justification very gracious and free,
“ though not absolutely free from all con-
“ dition.”

In these passages, surely, we find the doctrine of justification, strictly accordant with the language of our article, and sufficiently free from the charge of presumption or legality. I have dwelt the longer on this

point, because I think that Tillotson's earnestness in moral exhortation, and the argumentative cast of some of his discourses, have exposed him (however unjustly) to these imputations; and that a vague impression of his latitudinarian principles, (an epithet, by the way, applied to him and his contemporaries, in a sense very different from that which it bears at present,) has led some to suspect him of underrating the fundamental doctrines of the Church, and of exalting the morality of the Gospel, at the expense of its mysteries, and its mercies.

We are next to consider the doctrine of grace; upon which, the divines of this school are supposed to have deviated from the primitive standard, in consequence of their attachment to the Arminian system. I have already observed, that the original doctrine of Arminius upon free will, (taking it simply in his third proposition,) differs but little from the language of our article; while the fourth merely asserts, that grace is not irresistible, but "may be resisted and rendered ineffectual, by the

“perverse will of the impenitent sinner.” I allowed, however, that these principles had been much exaggerated, in the progress of the controversy; and that in England, from various causes, but particularly from the abuses of the Calvinistic scheme, they had become a part of the popular divinity. It is not to be denied, that in some which has come down to us, (and probably, from the state of the times, in much that is forgotten,) the doctrine of free will was inculcated, in terms apparently inconsistent with the degree of human depravity, announced in the Scriptures; and a natural and inherent capacity for holiness, was insinuated at least, if not asserted. From this objection, the sermons of Tillotson appear to me to be entirely exempt, and to be particularly strong and explicit, in shewing the absolute necessity of the divine grace and assistance; asserting, at the same time, the consistency of this grace, with that moral liberty of choice and of action, upon which the very idea of religious responsibility, must depend.

To convey a clear impression of his doctrine upon this important article, would require the citation of so many passages, as must lengthen this letter beyond all reasonable bounds; I shall, therefore, confine myself to one discourse, and trace, in his own language, the nature and influence of this “supernatural grace,” from its first or initiatory communication, to its full operation and effect, in the gradual sanctification and final salvation of the Christian.

“ God, considering the lapsed and decayed condition of mankind, sent his Son into the world, to recover us out of that sinful and miserable state, into which we were fallen, — to reveal eternal life to us, and the way to it, — and to offer it to us, upon certain conditions, to be performed by us. But we, being weak, and without strength, slaves to sin, and under the power of evil habits, *and unable to free ourselves from this bondage by any natural power left in us*, our blessed Saviour, in

“ great pity and tenderness to mankind,
“ hath in his Gospel, offered, and is ready
“ to afford to us, an extraordinary assist-
“ ance of his grace and Holy Spirit, to
“ supply the defects of our natural power
“ and strength. And this supernatural
“ grace of Christ *is that alone*, which can
“ enable us to perform what he requires of
“ us :—and this, according to its several
“ uses and occasions, is called by several
“ names: it is called preventing grace, as
“ it excites us to that which is good, pre-
“ venting any motion or desire on our parts;
“ assisting grace, as it strengthens us; and
“ persevering grace, as it keeps us constant
“ in a good course; and it may have several
“ other denominations,—for it is suited to
“ all our occasions and necessities.”

“ To this grace and assistance of God,
“ the Scriptures constantly attribute our
“ regeneration, sanctification, and persever-
“ ance in holiness; and plainly express
“ the supernatural assistance of Christ,
“ whereby we become good, and are en-

“abled to do any thing that is good, and
“are preserved and continued in a good
“course. As the Scripture doth every
“where attribute sin to our own corrupt
“hearts, and to the temptation and insti-
“gation of the Devil ; so doth it constantly
“ascribe *all* the good that we do, to the
“grace of Christ ; or, which is all one, to
“the blessed motions and assistances of
“God’s Holy Spirit.”

I omit the corroborative texts urged by the preacher, where they are not absolutely necessary to preserve the connexion of the sentence ; as my object is merely to state his view of the doctrine, and not to argue the truth of it ; upon which you know that my conviction is as strong as your own.

In the prosecution of the subject, the necessity of the divine grace and assistance, is argued upon various grounds,—the corruption of human nature, the power of evil habits, the fickleness of human resolution,

and the malice and activity of the great enemy of mankind. This grace is not, however, afforded to exclude, but rather *supposes the concurrence* of, our own exertions. “The branches of the vine are “not merely passive, but contribute their “part to the production of fruit, though “they derive continual supplies of sap and “virtue from the vine:”—“The acknowledgment of impotency does not exclude “endeavour;—”and “God’s preventing and “assisting grace, his working in us both to “will and to do, so far from excluding our “own endeavours, is used by the Apostle, “as a strong reason and argument to the “contrary.”

• In attributing to man, the capacity of co-operating with the divine grace, you will observe, that Tillotson every where speaks of that capacity, as derived from grace alone. This is a point particularly to be remembered, as it is the hinge upon which the whole controversy turns. The exercise of a derived and imparted power, implies no presumption of natural strength or suffi-

ciency; and the grace of God is not depreciated, by the acknowledgment of that moral liberty, to which in fact it may be said to have restored mankind.

But let us follow him in his account of the origin and effect, of this blessed privilege of the Gospel : “ This grace and assistance
“ (he continues) is derived to us from our
“ union with Christ. So soon as we believe
“ in him, and heartily embrace his doctrine,
“ we are united to him; and, if we continue
“ in this faith, we *abide* in him, and he in
“ us ; and by virtue of this union, the in-
“ fluences of his grace, and the aid and
“ assistances of his Spirit, are derived to us,
“ to all the purposes of holiness and obedi-
“ ence.”

“ But, when I say this grace and assist-
“ ance is derived to us from our union with
“ Christ, I do not intend to exclude the
“ necessity of God’s grace and Holy Spirit,
“ to the conversion of a sinner, and his first
“ planting in Christ. But when we say, that
“ Christians derive the influence of divine

“ grace, from their union with Christ, this
“ supposeth them to be Christians already,
“ and planted in Christ, and that this
“ likewise is the work of God’s grace ; for
“ if we cannot bring forth fruit, without the
“ aid and assistance of his Spirit, much less
“ without that, could we be planted into
“ him, and united with him.”

“ Here, then, is every reason why we
“ should continually depend upon God, and
“ every day earnestly pray to him, for the
“ aid of his grace, and the influence of his
“ Spirit, to guide, and direct, and strengthen
“ us in all goodness ; and to keep us by his
“ mighty power, through faith unto salva-
“ tion.”

Surely, the advocate of doctrines like these, cannot fairly be cited, as the preacher of a cold and self-dependent morality, or a retailer of the maxims of Pagan or philosophic virtue : and it would be but candid, when such maxims occur (as they do occasionally occur in his writings), to under-

stand them rather as illustrations, or sometimes as arguments *ad hominem*, than as principles intended to supply a sufficient rule of conduct, or to supersede the peculiar and humiliating truths of the Gospel.

Adieu.

LETTER XXVI.

TILLOTSON.

SERMONS SIXTY-EIGHT AND SIXTY-NINE. — TITLE. — CHARACTER AND OFFICE OF CHRIST DESCRIBED. — DEFINITION OF GOSPEL OBEDIENCE. — RECONCILEABLE, OR SYNONYMOUS WITH THAT OF EVANGELICAL FAITH. — EXTRACTS. — OBEDIENCE, VIRTUAL AND ACTUAL. — FAITH THE PRINCIPLE, OBEDIENCE THE RESULT. — POSSIBILITY OF EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE, — THROUGH GRACE. — NECESSITY OF THIS OBEDIENCE. — REMARKABLE APPLICATION OF THE EPITHET “GOOD WORKS.” — CONSISTENCY OF THIS METHOD OF SALVATION, WITH FREE GRACE. — FINAL STATEMENT OF TILLOTSON’S DOCTRINE. — PARALLEL EXTRACT FROM HOOKER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SHALL observe only upon two sermons more; the former of which, from its title*, would appear likely to be obnoxious to the charge of legality, if such a charge could be fairly applied to any of these excellent discourses.

Before we proceed to the examination of these, allow me to lay before you two ob-

* Christ the Author, and Obedience the Condition, of Salvation.

servations, which I extract from a very able and temperate work, in defence of the Evangelical principles and preaching*; and which (I think) can hardly be understood, without supposing the author to hold (in some sense) the doctrine of an initial and a final justification; and, if not expressly to limit the former, to the original act of forgiveness, at least to distinguish it from that consummation of redemption, which he still appears to consider as conditional.

“ Is there, then, no place (he asks) for “ *conditions* in the system of Christian instruction? For the conditions of salvation, “ there certainly is. When understood to “ designate that personal obedience, without “ which we cannot be saved, let them be “ urged with the utmost zeal.”

“ To the term, so understood (viz, as “ the circumstance without which an effect “ will not take place), many of the advocates of the doctrine of justification by

* Zeal without Innovation.

“faith, have nothing to object, when used
“in reference to the *final result* of justifica-
“tion. *But, confining the word justification*
“*to the simple question to which it relates,*
“namely, to the being treated as righteous,
“they know not how to speak of conditions,
“on such a subject.”

I cite these passages, not to observe upon any apparent discrepancy between them, (which is very fairly obviated by the context), but to show that the doctrine they contain, differs not essentially (if it differ at all) from the views of Tillotson, which we have been considering, and particularly those, exhibited in the sixty-eighth and sixty-ninth sermons, to which I have adverted above.

These sermons open very judiciously, with a definition of the term “salvation;” which is stated to include, “not only our deliver-
“ance from Hell, and redemption from
“eternal misery, but the obtaining for us
“eternal life and happiness;” expressing (as I understand) the consummation and

fulfilment of the covenant of mercy, to which man is gratuitously admitted by justification.

Of this salvation, Christ is stated in these sermons as the author, and obedience is prescribed, as the indispensable condition; and the consistency of this condition, with the doctrine of justification by faith, and the free grace and mercy of God, is proved in the concluding observations.

The character and office of our blessed Lord, as the author of salvation, are described in the following passages, amongst many others too long to insert :

“ He is the author and cause of our salvation ; as a rule and as a pattern, as a price and propitiation, and as an advocate that is continually pleading our cause, and interceding with God in our behalf.”

“ The perfections essential to the character of an High Priest, who should be qualified

to recover man from his sad state of corruption and condemnation, are shown to have been united in our blessed Lord, and in him only; and by these, he is declared to be “every way suited, to all our wants and “necessities,—to all our defects and infirmities,—to instruct our ignorance by his “doctrine,—to lead us into the path of “righteousness, by his most holy and exemplary life,—to expiate the guilt of our “sins by his death,—and to procure grace “and assistance for us, by his prevalent “intercession in our behalf.”

He is more emphatically described, as “the “author of eternal salvation, as he hath “purchased it for us, by the merit of his “obedience and sufferings.”—“He was “contented to be substituted a sacrifice for “us.”—“He died for us; not only for our “benefit and advantage, but in our place “and stead; so that if he had not died, “we had eternally perished.”

Christ is also stated to be the author of our salvation, “in respect of his power-

“ful and perpetual intercession for us at the right hand of God.” “And by virtue of this intercession” (it is further said) “our sins are pardoned, upon our sincere repentance; our prayers are answered; our wants are supplied; and the grace and assistance of God’s Holy Spirit are plentifully afforded to us.”

These propositions, strong and unequivocal as they are, in describing Christ alone as the author and efficient of salvation, we have seen repeatedly advanced in the other sermons; and perhaps I should apologize for an apparent tautology in again citing them here. But where the doctrine of conditions was to be discussed, it was particularly necessary to exhibit the sole meritorious cause of Salvation, in all its dignity and distinctness; and it was essential to our argument to prove, by citations in direct connexion with this doctrine, that Tillotson held and preached it in such a sense, as entirely to maintain its consistency with the free grace of the Gospel dispensation.

In the definition of that obedience, which the Gospel requires as a condition, and promises to accept as a qualification for salvation, the author exhibits precisely the view of that evangelical faith, which, as far as I understand, all Christians who maintain the doctrine of the atonement (except the Antinomians,) agree in prescribing, as the indispensable requisite to justification: not a mere outward profession of Christianity, nor even a speculative belief of its truths,—not an external worship of the Saviour, nor an indolent and unproductive appropriation of his promises,—but a sincere acceptance of him in all his gracious offices, and an honest and universal submission to all the precepts of his Gospel; of which, the preacher goes on to prove that a true Christian faith is necessarily productive. It is, in fact, only a description of the same condition, under different names; and harmonizes equally with the doctrine of the Apostles,—of the Homilies, which I quoted in a former letter,—of the public services of our Church,—and of many respectable authorities in our own day, who,

from little differences of verbal explication, may sometimes appear to hold a different opinion.

To give you my reasons for supposing this difference to rest upon a mere transmutation of terms, I must transcribe the definition of obedience, more fully than I intended ; but neither your time nor mine will be mis-employed, if this definition, or any other evidence cited in my letters, shall contribute to remove your jealousy of a writer, whom I cannot but consider as deserving, in the *best* sense, the title of Evangelical,—impartial in his enquiry after truth, and though free and independent in the use of his own understanding, in the contemplation of every human system, implicitly submissive to the truth and authority of Scripture, and (to use the words of his own excellent prayer) desirous only to receive and obey it from the heart, whenever it was discovered to him.

“That we may more clearly and decidedly understand what obedience it is

“ that the Gospel exacts, as an indispensable
“ condition of eternal salvation, and a
“ necessary qualification in all those who
“ hope to be made partakers of it, we may
“ be pleased to consider, that there is a
“ virtual and an actual obedience to the
“ laws of God. By an actual obedience, I
“ mean the practice and exercise of the
“ several graces and virtues of Christianity,
“ and the course and tenour of a holy life ;
“ when out of a good conversation men do
“ show forth their works, and by the out-
“ ward actions of their lives, do give real
“ testimony of their piety, justice, sobriety,
“ humility, meekness, and charity, and all
“ other Christian graces and virtues, as oc-
“ casion is ministered for the practice and
“ exercise of them.”

“ By a *virtual* obedience, I mean a sin-
“ cere belief of the Gospel; of the holi-
“ ness and equity of its precepts, of the
“ truth of its promises, and the terror of its
“ threatenings, and a true repentance for
“ all our sins: *This is obedience in the root*
“ *and principle*; for he who sincerely be-

“ lieves the Gospel, and does truly repent
“ of the errors and miscarriages of his life,
“ is firmly resolved to obey the commands
“ of God, and to walk before him in holi-
“ ness and righteousness, all the days of his
“ life ; so that there is nothing to prevent
“ or hinder this man’s actual obedience to
“ the laws of God, in the course of a holy
“ and good life, but the want of time and
“ opportunity for it. And this was the
“ case of those, who upon the hearing of
“ the Gospel, when it was first preached to
“ them, did heartily embrace it, and turn
“ from their sins, and from the worship of
“ idols, to the true and living God, but
“ were cut off soon after : and there is no
“ doubt to be made, but in this case (and,
“ by parity of reasoning, in all similar
“ cases,) a virtual obedience was a sufficient
“ qualification for eternal life.”

“ But where there is time and oppor-
“ tunity for the exercise of obedience, there
“ an *actual* obedience to the laws and pre-
“ cepts of the Gospel is necessary, to qualify
“ us for eternal happiness. So that, though

“ a man do sincerely believe the Gospel,
“ and truly repent of his sins, and resolve
“ upon a better life, yet if he do not after-
“ wards put this resolution in practice, and
“ bring forth fruits meet for repentance, his
“ first resolution of obedience, though it
“ were sincere, will not avail him to sal-
“ vation.”

“ The sum of what I have said (he con-
“ tinues,) is this: that a *virtual* obedience,
“ and sincere faith and repentance, are suf-
“ ficient, where there is no time and op-
“ portunity for actual obedience; but where
“ there is opportunity for actual obedience,
“ and the continual practice of a good life,
“ and perseverance therein, they are indis-
“ pensably necessary, in order to our eternal
“ salvation, and a well-grounded hope and
“ assurance of it.” •

I know not what you will think of the above quotation; but to my mind, it suggests exactly the same ideas which I derive from the evangelical doctrine, of justification by a lively faith; and I am sure the dis-

crepancy, if there be any, is chiefly in the expression ; and is not a sufficient ground of objection, to the advocates of either form of explication, so long as the substantial truth is preserved, that we are justified, not for our own merits, but solely for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We need not follow the preacher, in his distinction of perfect and sincere obedience ; or in his observations on the impossibility of the one, and the acceptability (through the merits of our blessed Saviour,) of the other, — not (God forbid !) upon the presumptuous claim of personal service, but upon the impulse of his free grace and mercy.

In the sixty-ninth sermon, three remaining points are discussed, upon which I shall touch very briefly, and still principally in the way of quotation.

First, “ the possibility of performing the condition of obedience, prescribed by the gospel : ” —

Secondly, “ the necessity of this obedience :” — and

Thirdly, “ the consistency of this method “ and means of salvation, with the law of “ faith, and the free grace and mercy of “ God, declared in the gospel.”

The possibility of performing this condition, is attributed by the preacher entirely to the grace and assistance of God, which is offered, and ready to be afforded to us, by the gospel. And surely no depreciation of the power of divine grace, or presumptuous estimate of human strength and sufficiency, can be inferred from the following statement : —

“ The grace of God doth clearly appear “ in the whole business of our salvation. “ By grace ye are saved, through faith, “ (says the Apostle) and that, not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Faith is the “ gift of God, and so is repentance: it is “ God that works in us both to will and to “ do, of his own goodness; that is, who both “ inclines and excites us to that which is

“ good, and enables us to do it. Without
“ me (says Christ,) ye can do nothing: and—
“ through Christ strengthening me, (says
“ St. Paul) I am able to do all things. With-
“ out the grace of Christ, we are without
“ strength, — and are not sufficient of our-
“ selves, as of ourselves, to think a good
“ thought; but our sufficiency is of God.”

This divine grace is farther represented as the only effectual correction of human depravity: but, as the Scriptures adduced in proof of this point, have been already cited, in our reference to the sermons on grace, I need not here repeat them.

I omit also the arguments for the necessity of obedience, except the proposition of the doctrine; which is, in fact, a reply to the objections that appear to charge it with presumption.

“ Some men seem to be so afraid of the
“ *merit* of obedience and good works, that
“ they are loth to assent to the *necessity* of
“ them; and do it with so much caution,

“ as if they were not thoroughly persuaded
“ of it, or did apprehend some dangerous
“ consequences from it. But this fear is
“ perfectly groundless ; for any man surely
“ can discern a plain difference, between
“ a worthiness of desert, and a fitness of
“ receiving a rebel, being penitent, and
“ sorry for what he hath done. Though he
“ cannot deserve a pardon, he may be there-
“ by qualified and made meet to receive it ;
“ — though repentance do not make him
“ worthy, yet it may make him capable, of
“ it, which an obstinate rebel, and one
“ that persists in his disloyalty, is not.”

I shall leave this part of the subject, with the remark, that the application of the epithets “good works,” and “obedience,” not to any actual or material performances, (if I may so call them,) but emphatically to a change in the temper and frame of mind, seems completely to reconcile, if not to identify, this doctrine, with the evangelical view of justification ; and, indeed, I am inclined to think, that if Tillotson had been

called upon to combat the presumptuous legalist, as often as he was obliged to oppose the profligate, the infidel, and the Antinomian, his doctrine, of justification by the faith of Christ alone, would have been as free from ambiguity in the statement, as it seems to be from error in the principle.

But I have conceded more than I intended, in even supposing such an ambiguity; the appearance of which, I am persuaded, arises from circumstances of local application, and would vanish, upon a fair and impartial collation of the sermons in which the various doctrines are discussed, with a reference to the times, places, and occasions of their delivery, and to the probable views and objects with which they were composed.

But I must restrain my rambling pen, and turn to the last head of the sermon under consideration; viz. the consistency of this method of salvation (its contingency on our obedience,) with the law of faith, and the free grace of God:—and this I

shall state in the author's own language, as the full and final expression of his judgment upon this doctrine, and of his reasons for so earnestly enforcing it.

“ No man,” he says, “ has reason to
“ fear, that this doctrine, of the necessity
“ of obedience to our acceptance with God,
“ and the obtaining of eternal life, should
“ be any way prejudicial to the law of faith,
“ and the law of grace, so long as these
“ three things are asserted and secured :—
“ First, that faith is the root and principle
“ of obedience and a holy life, and that with-
“ out it, it is impossible to please God : —
“ Secondly, that we stand continually in
“ need of the divine grace and assistance, to
“ enable us to perform that obedience, which
“ the gospel requires of us, and is pleased
“ to accept, in order to eternal life : —
“ Thirdly, that the forgiveness of our
“ sins, and the rewards of eternal life, are
“ founded in the free grace and mercy of
“ God, conferring these blessings upon us ;
“ not for the merit of our obedience, but

“ only for the merit and satisfaction, of the
“ obedience and sufferings of our blessed
“ Saviour and Redeemer. — I say, so long
“ as we assert these three things, we give
“ all that the gospel any where ascribes to
“ faith, or to the grace of God revealed in
“ the gospel.

“ I have been careful” (he continues,)
“ to express things more fully and dis-
“ tinctly, that no man may imagine, that
“ while we assert the necessity of obedience
“ and a holy life, we have any design to
“ derogate, in the least, from the faith and
“ the grace of God; but only to engage
“ and encourage men to holiness, by con-
“ vincing them of the absolute and indis-
“ pensable necessity of it, in order to
“ eternal salvation.”*

* The doctrine of Hooker, upon the subject of works, having been referred to in a former letter, the following passages may be cited, to prove his agreement with Tillotson. Both writers should be read with a recollection, that the object of the former, was to controvert the Romish doctrine, and of the latter, to oppose that of the

In the above propositions, the doctrine of works is stated more strongly, than in

Antinomian, or to remove the scruples of the Calvinist, respecting the consequences to be drawn from his enforcement of obedience as a condition of salvation.

“ The best things which we do, have somewhat in them to be pardoned; how then can we do any thing meritorious, or worthy to be rewarded? Indeed, God doth liberally promise whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life, to as many as *sincerely* keep his law, though they be not *exactly* able to keep it. Wherefore we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well, but the *meritorious dignity* of doing well, we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the *perfect* righteousness of the law. The little fruit that we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it; we challenge nothing in the world for it. We dare not call God to *reckoning* as if we had him in our *debt* books. Our continual suit to him, is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and to pardon our offences.”

Sermon on Justification.

The following passage from the same sermon, is equally clear in its agreement with Tillotson's doctrine.

“ Did they” (the fathers of the Romish Church) “hold, that we cannot be saved with Christ, without good works? We, ourselves, do, I think, say as much; with this construction, salvation being taken; — as in that sentence, *Corde creditur ad justitiam, ore fit confessio*

any other part of these sermons that I can discover. I shall leave you to form your own judgment upon them, and detain you no longer than while I add a few words upon the character of Tillotson's more general and practical discourses.

In a collection so large and miscellaneous, it would be a task beyond my ability or

“ *ad salutem* ; except infants, and men cut off upon the
 “ point of their conversion ; of the rest, none shall see
 “ God, but such as seek peace and holiness, though
 “ not as a *cause* of their salvation, yet as a way, in which
 “ they must walk which will be saved. — Did they hold,
 “ that without works we are not justified ? Take jus-
 “ tification, so as it may also imply sanctification, and
 “ St. James doth say as much. For, except there be an
 “ ambiguity in the same term, St. Paul and St. James
 “ do contradict each the other, which cannot be. Now,
 “ there is no ambiguity in the name, either of faith, or
 “ of works ; being meant by them, both in one and the
 “ same sense. Finding, therefore, that justification is
 “ spoken of by St. Paul, without implying sanctification,
 “ when he proveth that a man is justified by faith without
 “ works ; finding, likewise, that justification doth some-
 “ times imply sanctification also with it, I suppose no-
 “ thing to be more sound, than so to interpret St.
 “ James, speaking not in that sense, but in this.”

your patience, to trace the doctrinal explanations or allusions. It is not enough to say of these discourses, that the truths of the gospel are *assumed* in them as the ground of moral obligation ; — they are perpetually and prominently brought forward : the character of our blessed Lord, is exhibited and proposed as a pattern of perfect holiness, while his all-sufficient sacrifice is described as the only foundation of hope, — the moral purity inculcated by the preacher, is uniformly connected with purity of faith, — and the arguments, examples, and illustrations, are all built upon the principles of the gospel.

Where those “who do not believe,” are to be addressed, and the grounds and evidences of religion are to be proved, the preacher adopts a more general and philosophic process in his demonstrations ; and, if we revert to the circumstances of the times, and particularly to the prevalent affectation of separating religion from reason, and connecting philosophy with the doubt or disbelief of Revelation, we shall not (I

think) deny, that the preacher, who ably applies to the support and proof of Christianity, those principles of reason which are insidiously assumed by infidelity to subvert it, performs a very important service to the Christian cause.

Upon one point more, it would be unjust to omit the praise of Tillotson ; — as the advocate for the universal study of the Bible, and the zealous patron of religious education. To these, indeed, he refers, as his favourite topics of instruction, and seems to take refuge in them, from that “irksome and unpleasant work of controversy,” in which he laments his unavoidable engagement during the earlier part of his ministry. This circumstance will recommend him not a little, to your regard, and you will believe that it does not diminish his merit, in my estimation.

Yours, very affectionately.

LETTER XXVII.

BARROW.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DOCTOR BARROW. — HIS LITERARY CHARACTER. — PECULIAR IMPORTANCE OF THIS CHARACTER, TO HIS AUTHORITY AS A DIVINE. — GENERAL REFLECTIONS UPON THE TESTIMONY AFFORDED TO RELIGION, BY MEN EMINENT IN SCIENCE. — SUBJECTS SELECTED FOR EXAMINATION IN THIS REVIEW. — BARROW'S SERMONS ON FAITH. — HIS DOCTRINE OF HUMAN CORRUPTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE often, in the course of our correspondence, felt the temerity of my undertaking; not from any doubt of the strength of my cause, but from a consciousness of my own deficiency; and I never was more sensible of this disadvantage, than in approaching to the contemplation of the character of Barrow; — a character so distinguished, both by moral and intellectual excellence, that it seems equally dangerous and presumptuous, to consider it as a subject of critical investigation. As he holds,

however, a prominent place, if not the highest, amongst our divines of this period, and has maintained the theological principles which are said to have characterised the school of the Restoration, it is necessary to look for some evidence of his judgment upon those fundamental doctrines which the writers of this school are supposed to have modified ; and to trace the peculiar circumstances of his life, which influenced his style as a public preacher.

Dr. Barrow appears to have entered the University of Cambridge, while it was under the government of the presbyterians. His uncle (afterwards bishop of St. Asaph) had been one of the ejected fellows ; and his father had suffered so much by his adherence to the royal cause, that the young man's chief dependence for support, was upon the liberality of Dr. Hammond. He was a zealous loyalist and episcopalian ; and on his election to a fellowship in his college, finding himself precluded by his principles, from the Church, he turned his thoughts towards the medical profession,

and is said to have made a great progress in the sciences preparatory to it. On farther deliberation, however, and from a sense of duty, he devoted himself to the study of divinity; to which he conceived himself bound by his academical engagements.

With his eminence as a mathematician, we have no concern, farther than as it influenced his character as a divine; and gave to his sermons, rather the form of scientific treatises or dissertations, than of practical expositions or popular harangues. Yet, we may observe by the way, that there is something peculiarly encouraging, in the character of a religious mathematician; as the habit of strict demonstration, which the study of this science produces, seems rather likely to incapacitate the mind for the due appreciation of that moral evidence, of which alone, religion is susceptible; and it is the work of a strong and discriminating judgment, to resist the tendency to hesitation and scepticism, which such habits naturally create, and to acquiesce in that

moral and general proof, which is all that can be obtained, on historical or metaphysical subjects.

The Arminian principles attributed to Dr. Barrow, excluded him from the Greek professorship in his college ; to which he is said to have had high claims and strong recommendations ; and the next five years of his life, (from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-ninth of his age,) were passed in travel and study. In 1659, he received episcopal ordination ; and his past sufferings in the cause of loyalty, seemed to entitle him to the notice of the restored monarch. He obtained, however, at this time, no mark of the royal favour, and quietly resumed his academical studies and duties, till the year 1669 ; when he resolved to apply himself entirely to divinity ; and resigned his mathematical chair (to which he had been appointed in 1663,) to his friend Sir Isaac Newton.

Dr. Barrow does not appear to have been ever engaged in regular parochial preach-

ing. On his resignation of his professorship, he obtained a small sinecure in Wales and a prebend in the diocese of Salisbury; both of which he resigned, on his appointment to the mastership of his College, in 1672.

This preferment he owed to his distinguished merit alone, and meant not (says his biographer,) to use it as a step to a higher; but abated nothing of his diligence in study, devoting the day to public business, and borrowing from his morning's sleep, many hours, to increase his stock of sermons, and write his treatise on the pope's supremacy. He died in 1677, in the prime of life, and in the zenith of his reputation.

If we compare with this slight sketch, the traits of character incidentally exhibited in his writings, we shall find in them (I think) a high degree of that moral sublimity, which results from the union of deep Christian principle, with the consciousness of intellectual strength; — that peculiar

mixture of independence and submission, which arises from a clear discrimination of the provinces of reason and faith,—the confidence of a genius rightly estimating its own powers, and the caution in the use and application of these powers, which has been oftenest found in those gigantic minds, that seem to have almost touched the boundaries of human knowledge. The flippancy of superficial infidelity, shrinks before the majesty of an intellect, that has conquered every vanquishable difficulty in science; and, rising to a point of elevation, from whence the whole prospect of human discovery is commanded, discerns and respects the impassable barrier opposed by infinite wisdom, to the restless curiosity of human reason.

I believe there is no country, in which this sublime testimony to the truth and dignity of religion, has been more eminently afforded, than our own; and I think there is a distinction in the circumstances of our religious philosophers, and a peculiarity in

the character of their speculations, which should place their evidence upon a higher ground than that of mere authority.

Under arbitrary governments, the freedom of enquiry is controlled by the strong hand of power; and every disquisition upon speculative principles, is considered with a reference to its bearing upon established prejudices and institutions. Accordingly, we find, under such circumstances, either a boldness and flippancy of speculation, that questions indiscriminately all existing opinions, and shelters itself in the privilege of a philosophical scepticism, and the distinction of metaphysical, from moral and experimental truth,—or a cautious and politic evasion of discussion, which declines, with professed respect, but real contempt or indifference, the investigation of questions, supposed to refer to a science altogether distinct from temporal objects and interests,—to rest upon the evidence of authority alone,—and to be, as it were, cognizable only by the aid of a commissioned and privileged tribunal.

This would not, indeed, be the practice of all, nor perhaps of many, in such cases. An unreflecting and undistinguishing acquiescence would often result from the influence of habit and authority;—the separation of religious, from secular questions, would create a distinction in the principles upon which they were to be investigated,—and the free use of reason in theological enquiries, would be considered, if not as subversive of faith, at least as inconsistent with Christian submission and humility.

But where civil and religious freedom are happily understood and established,—where the Scriptures are received and liberally circulated, as the supreme and authoritative standard of truth, and religion is consequently divested of the obscurity, and preserved from the uncertainty, which a fallible or fluctuating standard must occasion,—theology assumes its proper place, as the most eminent and important of all sciences; bearing upon all man's highest interests, in his moral, intellectual, and spiritual capacity, and exhibiting its peculiar and appro-

priate evidences, in successive application, to his judgment, his conscience, and his heart. The defect of evidence strictly demonstrative, which the cautious or compromising speculatist assumes, as an apology for his exclusion of religion from the circle of his enquiries, the sounder philosopher traces to the nature of the subject. By clearly marking the boundaries of demonstrative and speculative science, and pursuing each upon its proper principles and proofs, he attains a power of weighing and comparing the varieties of moral evidence; of which he requires no more than the subject admits;—and, from an acquiescence in the historical proof of the facts connected with revelation, he rises to the perception of that higher evidence, which is built upon its suitableness to his own actual necessities,—and seeks for direction in the examination of its doctrines, the aid of that illuminating Spirit, through whom alone, as he learns from express declaration, the things of God can be effectually manifested to his understanding.

This cautious sobriety, which so eminently distinguished the characters of our Christian philosophers, while it established their scientific discoveries upon the basis of infallible certainty, gave a moral strength to their testimony in behalf of revelation, by removing all suspicion of precipitance or perversion of judgment, of the love of system, or deference to authority ; while their freedom from ecclesiastical engagements, exempted them from the imputations of interest or prejudice. In the evidence of a Bacon, a Newton, a Hale, a Boyle, and a Locke, we have an ample vindication of our religion, against those who would represent it as incapable of rational proof, and maintaining its influence through the imagination alone ; — and, tracing in Barrow the same characters of mind which we observe in these distinguished laymen, we find him, indeed, freely exercising the privilege of rational enquiry, upon all subjects within the scope of human judgment, — yet feeling, apparently, that thus far he can go, and no farther, and submitting with humble and entire acquiescence, to the testimony of di-

vine revelation, upon points, to the clear apprehension of which, he had experimentally found his own reason incompetent. "Faith," says he, "is the highest philosophy. The nature of Him, who dwelleth in that light which no man can approach unto,—the intentions of Him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,—the ways of Him, which are more discosted from our ways, than heaven from earth,—the depths of God, which none but his own spirit can search out or discover,—do lie beyond the sphere of natural light, and inquisition of our reason."—"But we have, as Saint Peter saith, a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto we do well to give heed,—as unto a lamp shining in a dark place,—guiding us in the obscurities and uncertainties of life. We have a hope, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stable; which stayeth and settleth our mind, being tossed with winds and waves of uncertain cogitations, suggested by different appearances of things."

But our present object confines us to the examination of those sermons of Barrow, which bear upon the fundamental doctrines above mentioned. In this examination, we must not lose sight of the consistency (which I maintain and you admit,) of redemption by grace in its fullest extent, with imparted free will and contingent salvation: and we must also recollect the state of the Church, which gave to these sermons, as to those of Tillotson, a controversial scope and bearing.

In the sermons "on Faith," (with which the series on the Creed commences,) we have a clear statement of the author's judgment, of the consistency of free agency in man, with the Gospel doctrine of divine influence and attraction. It is not fair to quarrel with this, as Pelagian or Arminian, unless it can be proved unscriptural. I quote it, however, only to connect it with another passage in the same sermon, exhibiting his view of human corruption:—a doctrine, which he does not appear to me to

have softened or compromised upon any occasion.

“ There is no man, to whom means are
“ not administered, sufficient to produce in
“ him that measure of faith, which is requisite
“ towards the good management of life, and
“ his rendering an account for it at God’s
“ tribunal. There is no man also, to whom
“ such means are afforded, whom the grace
“ of God (who desireth that all men should
“ be saved, and should come to the know-
“ ledge of the truth,) doth not in some de-
“ gree incite to the due improvement of
“ them. But in effect the case is varied,
“ because some men do embrace those
“ means, and comply with that grace, while
“ others do reject and neglect them.”

“ Our Lord saith, that every one who
“ hath heard of the Father, and hath learn-
“ ed, doth come unto him ; but some there
“ are, to whom the Father speaketh, yet
“ they stop their ears, and refuse to hear.
“ Some do hear in a sort, but do not learn;
“ ill prejudices or depraved affections, bar-

“ ring instruction from their minds ; being
“ like those, of whom the apostle saith,
“ the word preached did not profit them,
“ not being mixed with faith in them that
“ heard it.”

“ No man, (saith our Lord again,) can
“ come to me, except the Father draw him.
“ But this drawing is not compulsory: — we
“ may hold back; we may withstand it, and
“ not follow it.”

“ Faith (saith Saint Paul) is a gift of
“ God ; and a favour granted unto us. To
“ you, saith he, it hath been graciously
“ vouchsafed, not only to believe in him,
“ but also to suffer for him : and, — to you,
“ (saith our Lord) it is given, to know the
“ mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven. But
“ this gift is not always accepted; this favour
“ is not always entertained: — God doth not
“ so obtrude it upon us, but that we may
“ reject or decline it.”

“ Faith is a fruit of God's Spirit ; but
“ such, as will not grow in a bad soil, not

“ purged from weeds of corrupt prejudice,
“ of vicious affection, of worldly care ; —
“ which will not thrive, without good care
“ and culture.”

“ God inviteth us to believe, by the pro-
“ mulgation of his Gospel, and exhortation
“ of his ministers. He declareth abundant
“ reason to persuade us. He representeth to
“ our minds, the beauty of Christian truth
“ and virtue. He speaketh from without,
“ unto us, by manifold arguments, able, if
“ we are not very stupid, to convince us.
“ He speaketh within, by strong impres-
“ sions on our consciences, apt, if we are not
“ very stubborn, to subdue us. Behold,
“ (saith he,) I stand at the door and knock :
“ if any man will hear my voice, and will
“ open the door, I will come in unto him. —
“ Such is the case : — God standeth at the
“ door of our hearts, by the ministry of his
“ word ; he knocketh at it by the impulse
“ of his grace ; but to hear, is the work of
“ our vigilance, — to open, is the act of our
“ voluntary compliance.”

The necessary preparation, for the reception of the Gospel, and the attainment of that faith which is prescribed as indispensable to salvation, is humility: and this grace, the preacher grounds upon a consciousness of innate and hereditary corruption. Observe, that he is not here stating the doctrine polemically, but assuming it as an evident and acknowledged truth; and describing the frame of mind, which a conviction of it, ought to produce.

“ The first step into the Christian state, is
“ a sense of our imperfection, weakness,
“ baseness, and misery. We must discern
“ and *feel*, that our mind is very blind, and
“ our reason very feeble; — that our will is
“ very impotent, lame, depraved, prone to
“ evil, averse from good; — that our life is
“ void of merit, and polluted with guilt; —
“ that our condition is deplorably sad and
“ wretched; — that of ourselves we are in-
“ sufficient to think, or to do, any good; in
“ order to our recovery or deliverance: —
“ whence we are obliged to sore compunc-
“ tion of spirit, for our deeds and our case, —

“ to humble confession of our sins and
 “ miseries, — to earnest supplication for
 “ mercy and grace, to heal and rescue us
 “ from our sad estate. Lord, have mercy
 “ upon me, a sinner ! What shall I do to
 “ be saved ? Wretched man that I am ! who
 “ shall deliver me from this body of death ?
 “ Such are the ejaculations of a soul teem-
 “ ing with faith.”

I will add one passage more from this sermon, descriptive of the temper necessary to an effectual reception of the Gospel, and indicating (in my mind,) a feeling in the preacher, very different from that presumptuous self-dependence which the pride of philosophy is supposed to inspire : — and I am the rather induced to this, because the force and copiousness of his genius, appear to have led him occasionally to an extent of philosophical illustration, (particularly in some of his moral discourses,) which may have lessened their popular usefulness, by lessening their practical simplicity ; — and which (I believe) has contributed of late years (in conjunction with the fluctuation

in our style of divinity,) to expose them to the charge of a want of spirituality. I cannot, however, subscribe to the justice of this charge. If the term be understood in its general sense, as descriptive of our relation to the spiritual world, and of the peculiar views and duties consequent upon that relation, I think there is as much spirituality in these sermons, as in those of a more devotional and declamatory character, to which the epithet is commonly applied. — But I must give you my quotation, or the length of my preface will make you forget the object of it.

“ He that entereth into the faith, must
“ therewith entirely submit his understand-
“ ing, and resign his judgment, to God, as
“ his master and guide; — being ready to be-
“ lieve whatever God declareth, however to
“ him seeming unintelligible or incredible,
“ — to follow whither God conducteth, al-
“ though, like Abraham, he knoweth not
“ whither he goeth, — to approve that which
“ God ordaineth, however distasteful to his
“ sense, — to undertake that which God re-

“ quireth, however difficult, — to bear that
 “ which God imposeth, how burthensome
 “ soever : — being content that Divine Wis-
 “ dom shall absolutely sway and reign over
 “ his wisdom, — that his reason shall be
 “ puzzled — shall be baffled in many cases,
 “ — that his mind shall be rifled of all its
 “ prejudices, its fond conceits, its presump-
 “ tuous confidences, — of every thought and
 “ device, advancing itself against divine
 “ truth.”

“ He must abandon all good opinion of
 “ himself, — all conceitedness of his own
 “ worth, merit, excellency, felicity in any
 “ kind ; — slighting his wealth, his power, his
 “ dignity, his wit, his wisdom, and the like
 “ advantages, natural or secular, (which are
 “ so much prized in vulgar and worldly
 “ esteem,) as things in themselves of no
 “ consideration, nor otherwise valuable, than
 “ as talents intrusted by God, or instru-
 “ ments of his service, — disowning them
 “ from himself, as things freely dispensed
 “ by God, and absolutely depending on his
 “ disposal ; — saying, with Saint Paul, yea,

“doubtless I count all things but loss, for
 “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ
 “Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered
 “the loss of all things; and do count them
 “but dung, that I may win Christ, and be
 “found in him, not having mine own
 “righteousness, which is of the law, but
 “that which is through the faith of Christ.”

“Every Christian, as such, immediately
 “doth admit notions, quite debasing high
 “conceit;—which ascribe all our good things
 “purely to the Divine bounty,—which allow
 “us to own nothing but evil, springing from
 “our defects, infirmities, and corruptions,
 “from our guilty naughtiness and folly;—
 “which display our great imperfection, in-
 “digency, impotency, ignorance, error, un-
 “worthiness, and forlorn wretchedness;—
 “which assure us, that we do subsist in total
 “dependence upon God, continually need-
 “ing his protection, succour, and mercy,”

“What a striking contrast to the spirit
 “here described, is that of the Heathen
 “philosopher, who thought it reasonable to

“ thank the gods for every gift but virtue!
“ And how far short, the stability and purity
“ of that virtue whose principle was pride,
“ as exhibited in the systems, and exempli-
“ fied in the lives, even of the best and
“ wisest of these sages, of that magnificent
“ standard, which the Gospel of Christ ex-
“ hibits, which the faith of Christ inculcates,
“ and to which the blessed promise of the
“ spirit of Christ, encourages and impels !”

Having laid our foundation, in this short evidence of Barrow's view of the corruption of human nature, (which I take to be the stronger as it is incidental,) I shall notice only three of his doctrinal sermons, (those on Justification, and on the Passion of our Lord,) as directly connected with our subject. A more general criticism would be foreign to our purpose ; and I apprehend, that whatever view of these doctrines we find explicitly proposed in these discourses, we may conclude to be assumed on other occasions, as the basis of that practical morality, which the prevalence of infidel

or Antinomian licentiousness, rendered it necessary, distinctly to enforce.

Do not, however, suppose, that I acknowledge the exclusion of an express proposition of these doctrines, from the practical sermons of Barrow. On the contrary, I find them generally prominent; and his philosophy, comprehensive as it is, so thoroughly christianized, that I cannot read a page of these discourses, without being recalled to the direction of those great principles of revealed truth, upon which, I feel that a knowledge of the true nature of virtue, and a capacity for the practice of it, must be built.

Adieu.

LETTER XXVIII.

BARROW.

NATURE OF THE OBJECTION TO THE DIVINITY OF THE RESTORATION. — REMARKS ON THIS OBJECTION. — BARROW'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION. — NATURE OF JUSTIFYING FAITH. — LIMITATION OF THE TERM JUSTIFICATION, TO INITIAL FORGIVENESS AND ADOPTION. — FULLER APPLICATION OF IT. — REFERENCE TO THE ATONEMENT, AS THE SOLE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN DEPENDENCE. — CONCLUDING CAUTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is not so much, a departure from evangelical principles, as a defect of full evangelical statement, that seems to be imputed to the divines of this period, who advocated the Arminian scheme of doctrine; — a too favourable representation of the natural state of man, and his capacity for spiritual improvement, and a consequent depreciation, by inference at least, of the value and necessity of that divine grace, by which alone his regeneration can be effected.

Yet, if I mistake not, an impartial examination of the most eminent of these writers, would lead to a full refutation of this charge ; and I think we have seen, in our quotations from Tillotson, an explicit acknowledgment of these fundamental doctrines, and an assumption of them, as the basis of his practical exhortations. It is not, in fact, against the principles themselves, but against the perversion of them to the support of infidel or Antinomian systems, that we find the arguments of Tillotson directed ; and when he appears (as he sometimes does) to maintain the sufficiency of the moral sense, and the abstract dignity of human nature, it is either in reference to societies living under the light of Christianity, or in an application similar to that of the Apostle, — who describes the Gentiles, not having the law, as being (in a manner) “ a law unto themselves,” showing the work of the law “ written in their hearts,” and feeling the impulses, or the checks, of natural conscience.

The extracts from Barrow in my last letter, sufficiently show his estimate of human corruption ; with which, a sense of the necessity of spiritual influence is so inseparably connected in a Christian mind, that either is established, by the evidence adduced in proof of the other. It would lead us too far, to remark, in his writings, and those of Tillotson, the distinction of this moral sense, or perception of good and evil, — which they seem to consider as natural and universal, — from that influential determination of the will, on the simple ground of obedience to God, which they describe under the epithet of faith, and to which they uniformly refer, as the principle of Christian virtue. Allow me to recommend to your attentive perusal, the second of Barrow's Sermons on Faith ; in which you will find as noble a description of this evangelical grace, and as earnest a persuasion to the cultivation of it, as the whole range of modern divinity can furnish.

In the sermons which follow next in the series, we have the doctrine of justification

by faith, so fully and explicitly stated, as to leave to many of its later advocates, little more than the task of repetition. I do not say, that Barrow considers the question here in every possible light, or says every thing that might be said upon it. On the contrary, he seems purposely to avoid this wide and generalizing view, and to restrict the phrase, to its simple and primary acceptation, that of “remission of sins.”

The acknowledged excellence of these two discourses, and the mutual appeal to them, by our religious parties, might preclude the necessity of a more particular consideration: yet, as the precise view of justification, has been made — and justly made — an essential distinction in religion, it may not be useless to trace the agreement of this able divine, with *each* of the parties who have been supposed to differ so widely, and the consequent consistency and harmony, of principles which have been (perhaps hastily) deemed irreconcilable.

The points proposed for discussion in the first of these sermons, (*Romans 5,—verse 1.*) or, as it is called, the explicatory part, are, — first, what is that faith whereby we are said to be justified? — secondly, what being justified doth import? — thirdly, how by such faith we are so justified? — fourthly, what the peace of God is, which is here adjoined to justification? — fifthly, what relation the whole matter bears to our Lord Jesus Christ?

Under the first head, the various senses of the word Faith, are considered: — the simple belief of the truth of any proposition; the connection of this belief with any specific object; the rational deductions drawn from this belief; and the consequent desires, affections, and resolutions excited by it. All these are comprehended by the preacher, in the definition of religious or Christian faith; a faith, which is expressly stated to be “an especial instrument of our salvation, and a necessary condition prerequisite to our partaking the benefits

“ and privileges, conferred by the Divine
“ favour on Christians.”

“ The result” (or rather the comprehensive description of that faith, which the above process would establish) is thus stated : —
“ The being truly and firmly persuaded in
“ our minds, that Jesus was, what he professed himself to be, and what the apostles testified him to be ; — the Messias, by
“ God designed, foretold, and promised to
“ be sent into the world, to redeem, govern,
“ instruct, and save mankind, — our Redeemer and Saviour, — our Lord and
“ Master, — our King and Judge, — the
“ great High Priest and Prophet of God ; —
“ the being assured of these, and all other
“ propositions connected with them ; — or,
“ in short, the being thoroughly persuaded
“ of the truth of that Gospel, which was
“ revealed and taught by Jesus and his
“ apostles.”

“ That this notion is true, those descriptions of faith, and phrases expressing it,
“ do abundantly show ; and the nature and

“ reason of the thing doth confirm the
 “ samē: — for that such a faith is in its
 “ design and order, apt and sufficient to pro-
 “ mote God’s design of saving us, — to
 “ render us capable of God’s favour, — to
 “ purge our hearts, and work that change of
 “ mind which is necessary in order to the
 “ obtaining God’s favour, and enjoying
 “ happiness, — to produce that obedience
 “ which God requires of us, and without
 “ which we cannot be saved, — these things
 “ are the natural results, of such a persua-
 “ sion concerning those truths; — as na-
 “ tural, as the desire and pursuit of any
 “ good dôth arise from the clear apprehen-
 “ sion thereof, or as the shunning any
 “ mischief, doth follow from the like ap-
 “ prehension.”

You will observe that the discussion in
 this place, is limited to the *natural* effects of
 Christian faith upon the character. The ne-
 cessity of divine grace to produce this faith
 and its fruits, — the power of God working
 in us both to will and to do, — the in-
 strumentality of faith to our salvation, only

under the influence and aid of the Holy Spirit, — had been acknowledged in a former discourse, and will be again brought forward. The object here is only to prove the peculiar fitness of this grace of faith, for the office assigned to it, and the wisdom of making it the preliminary qualification, for admission to the privileges of the Gospel.

“ So strong a persuasion ” (he continues)
 “ that the Christian religion is true, and the
 “ way of obtaining happiness, and of escap-
 “ ing misery, doth naturally produce a sub-
 “ jection of heart, and an obedience there-
 “ to ; and accordingly we see the ‘ highest of
 “ those effects which the Gospel offers or
 “ requires, assigned to this faith, as results
 “ from it, or adjuncts thereof ; — regenera-
 “ tion, — spiritual re-union with God, —
 “ the obtaining God’s love, — victory over
 “ the world, — freedom from spiritual
 “ slavery, — becoming true disciples of
 “ Christ, — and obtaining everlasting life ; —
 “ rising with Christ, (that is, as to capacity
 “ and right ; —) being saved, — being jus-
 “ tified.”

This justification, I have already remarked, he limits here, to its initial sense,—the forgiveness of sins, and admission to the Christian covenant. “We may also observe” (he says) “in the history concerning our Lord and his apostles’ proceeding towards persons whom they had converted to Christianity, and did admit to a participation of the privileges thereof, that no other faith was required in order thereto. Upon such a persuasion appearing, they received them into the church, baptized them, pronounced unto them, an absolution from their sins, and a reception into God’s favour ; or, in Saint Paul’s language, did justify them, according to their subordinate manner, as ministers of God.”

But even this faith, this original persuasion of the mind, he expressly ascribes to the influence of Divine grace and inspiration, and rejects the notion of any inherent or natural capacity in man, to receive or understand the truths of the Gospel, without the drawing and the teaching of God.

That the faith here supposed to be required, even for the privilege of initiation, is a lively and operative faith, not yet indeed actually producing, but necessarily productive in its nature, of all Christian graces and virtues, is evident from the following observations.

“ This faith doth not only denote precisely and abstractedly, such acts of mind, such opinions and persuasions concerning the truth of matters specified, but doth also connote and imply (and indeed *comprehend*, according to the meaning of those who use the word,) such acts of *will*, as, supposing those persuasions to be real and complete, are naturally consequent upon them, and are in a manner necessarily coherent with them ; — a firm resolution, constantly to profess and adhere to the doctrine, of which a man is so persuaded ; — to obey all the laws and precepts which it contains ; — forsaking, in open profession, and in *real practice*, all principles and customs inconsistent with those doctrines and laws : — that

“ which is called conversion, or returning
“ unto the Lord.” — “ The word faith is
“ there extended, beyond its natural and
“ primary force, to comprehend such a com-
“ pliance of *will*, or purpose of obedience,
“ because this doth naturally arise from a
“ persuasion concerning the truth of the
“ Gospel, if it be real, and strong enough,
“ in that degree which Christianity requires
“ and supposes, to the effects mentioned in
“ the Gospel.” — “ In short, this faith is
“ nothing else, but a true, serious, resolute,
“ embracing Christianity ; not only being
“ persuaded that all the doctrines of Christ
“ are true, but submitting to his will and
“ command in all things.”

This faith is farther described by the preacher, in its peculiar reference to the doctrine of the atonement, and emphatically called, “ belief in the blood of Christ ;” and the importance of this inestimable doctrine, with the value of the propositions and promises connected with it, set forth in the fullest manner. “ Yet are not these pro-
“ positions and promises the adequate and

“ entire object of this faith ; for other arti-
“ cles of faith are often proposed in a colla-
“ teral order with these ; — yea, sometimes
“ they are expressed, when that is not men-
“ tioned, but only understood : neither, if
“ any one should believe all the doctrines
“ of that kind, if he did not withal believe
“ that Jesus is his Lord, and shall be his
“ Judge, — that there shall be a resurrection
“ of the dead, and a judgment to come, —
“ with the like fundamental verities of our
“ religion, — could he be a believer, in
“ this sense.”

In the next section, he distinguishes this general faith and trust in the certainty of God's declarations and promises, from that special and personal appropriation, which was taught in what was called the doctrine of assurance, and which Hooker had combated a century before, nearly in the same language. He also controverts the doctrine of absolute predestination, and, by consequence, the certainty of final perseverance ; or, perhaps I should rather say, that he controverts, the personal application

of these doctrines to the case of the individual believer: for, though evidently not holding them himself, he is by no means dogmatical upon the general questions; and the “new and harsh notion,” to which he alludes, seems rather to refer, to the exclusive prejudice entertained by some advocates of these opinions, against those who rejected them.

The closing observations, upon the “new and mystical,” or rather metaphorical phraseology, are as applicable to our own times, as to those for which they were intended. I have already expressed my conviction, that many sincere Christians amongst us differ, rather in modes of explanation, than in principle; and there seems no prospect of a mutual approximation, so promising, as the use of a common language, and the precise definition of those terms, whether Scriptural or conventional, which are employed to express the opinions of the respective parties. If some of the expressions here quoted by Barrow (and similar phrases now in use) were to be thus

strictly analysed, the obscurity and uncertainty, if not the fallacy, of the notions grounded on them, would probably appear; and though there still might, and would, be differences of opinion, (as there must be, until faith shall be lost in sight,) there would be less pertinacity of dispute, and a clearer view, upon all sides, of the more important questions in discussion.

Having come to the end of the first of these sermons, I shall here bid you farewell, and reserve the examination of the second, for my next letter. I must remind you that my remarks upon both, are limited to the elucidation of their doctrinal character, and that I do not attempt any general criticism, either upon these discourses, or upon any others which I may have occasion to notice, in the course of our correspondence.

Adieu.

LETTER XXIX.

BARROW.

ORIGIN OF THE CONTROVERSIAL DISCUSSIONS ON JUSTIFICATION. — VARIOUS SENSES OF THE WORD, IN SCRIPTURE, AND IN THE WRITINGS OF THE REFORMERS. — OBJECT OF THE REFORMERS IN STATING THIS DOCTRINE. — HOMILY ON SALVATION. — REMARKS ON THE WORD JUSTIFICATION, AS THERE USED. — DISCREPANCIES IN THE STATEMENT OF THIS DOCTRINE, RECONCILEABLE. — OPINION OF BARROW. — HIS ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CONTROVERSY. — A PACIFICATORY REMARK. — FARTHER EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINE. — CONSISTENCY OF FREE GRACE WITH CONTINGENT SALVATION. — STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE IN THIS SERMON — EXCLUDES ALL BOASTING, OR PRESUMPTION OF MERIT. — CONNECTION OF JUSTIFICATION WITH BAPTISM. — OPINIONS OF LUTHER, OF CALVIN, AND OF BARROW.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I PROCEED to offer the remaining observations which occur to me, on these celebrated Sermons of Barrow; and shall enter upon them without farther preface, as what I have yet to say, will not easily be compressed within the space which your patience may be willing to allow me.

Of the five points proposed for consideration in these Sermons, two only appear to be fully discussed ; — the nature of justifying faith, — and the exact import of the word “ justification.”

In approaching to this latter question, I feel the difficulty even of stating the opinion of another, without assuming a tone more controversial, than suits either my object or my character ; but it is important to our purpose to show, that the definitions now viewed with so much jealousy, are not of recent introduction in our Church ; and that the distinction of initial and final justification, — or rather the limitation of the phrase to the former sense, — may be held consistently with a full impression of the gratuitous character of the Gospel dispensation, and of the necessity and continued agency of divine grace, in the first conversion, the progressive sanctification, and final salvation, of the sinner.

In every case, the necessity of strict definition, has arisen from the experience of

misapprehension. Where an agreement in substance is understood, there is little contention about the precise meaning of expressions. In the early history of our religion especially, we find none of those strict analyzations of doctrine, which subsequent dissensions and heresies have occasioned. The short propositions of the Apostles' creed, or of some similar form, were sufficient to fix the faith of the early Christians; and it was not till the perverse ingenuity of Gentile philosophy, had introduced a presumptuous curiosity into the Church, that it was found necessary to guard these fundamental articles by more strict and minute definition.

The practice of considering the doctrine of justification, as a distinct question in theology, appears to have taken its rise from an experience of similar corruption in this great article of the Christian Faith; — a corruption the more dangerous, as it seems to have had its origin in pride; and, under the plausible formalities of penitence, to have led to a virtual rejection of the doctrine of

the atonement, — and an exaltation of some personal and meritorious claim on the part of the individual, to a participation, at least, with the office of the Saviour in the work of justification.

If we examine the various applications of this remarkable phrase, in Scripture, we shall find it often used incidentally and generally, for the expression of ideas more clearly stated elsewhere, in other terms ; as, forgiveness of sins, remission, reconciliation, &c. It is also used to express the certain promise of final salvation, but obviously under an implied condition, of compliance with the Gospel covenant : and, that it was understood in this general sense by our Reformers, is evident from their indiscriminate use of the words “ justification ” and “ salvation,” in the Homily on this important article.

Under all, or any of these definitions, the prominent object of these excellent men was, to separate the doctrine, from the scholastic and popish abuses with which it had

been incumbered ; — to represent justification as an act of the Deity exclusively ; as a gratuitous extension of mercy to man, *solely* on account of the merits and mediation of the Redeemer ; — to mark emphatically, man's utter destitution of any meritorious claim to salvation ; — and to refute the presumptuous notion, of desert preparatory to justification, (or, as it was called, merit of congruity,) against which, we find the doctrine of a subsequent article still more expressly directed.

In this view, the question seemed to rest, not so much upon the sense of the word “ justification,” as upon the principle, or effective cause, through which the privilege so designated, was to be obtained ; whether as consequent upon a predisposition in man, rendering him capable, or, in the presumptuous phrase, worthy, of an infusion of Divine grace, — or, as resulting from the mercy of God alone, and attainable only through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, applied, in humble faith, and entire self-renunciation, to the soul of the penitent

sinner. It was the object of our Reformers to teach, that “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin ;” — “that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins ;” — and, that we are justified, or our sins so remitted, by God’s free mercy and the merits of Christ alone, — “and by no virtue or good work of our own, that is in us, or that we may be able to have, or to do, for to deserve the same.”

It is remarkable, that the Homily on Salvation, — the title of which has been very fairly adduced to prove the identity of initial, with final justification, in the judgment of our Reformers, — begins with a definition which seems strictly applicable to the initiatory act of remission. — “Because all men be sinners, and offenders against God, and breakers of his laws and commandments, therefore can no man, by his own acts, works, and deeds (seem they never so good,) be justified and made righteous before God ; but every man, of necessity, is constrained to seek for another right-

“eousness or justification ; that is to say,
 “ the *forgiveness* of his sins and trespasses,
 “ in such things as he hath offended.”
 And this justification, purchased by Christ,
 and ministerially consigned in baptism (as
 appears by the reference to the case of bap-
 tized infants, in the same Homily), is re-
 newed, to them, “ who in act or deed do
 “ sin after their baptism, when they turn
 “ again to God unfeignedly.”

In this sense, I should conceive justifi-
 cation to imply a state of present acceptance
 with God, — or, rather, of acceptability: and
 I should think it might be fairly inferred
 from the tenor of the Homilies on this sub-
 ject, that, — as the privilege of justification
 is inseparably connected with a true and lively
 faith, through every period of the Christian’s
 life, till its accomplishment in his final salva-
 tion, — the continuance of it, must depend
 on his perseverance in this faith ; — and,
 though the debt of sin once cancelled, is no
 more remembered against him, yet a new
 and heavier debt may be incurred ; and the
 blood of the covenant wherewith he was

sanctified, may mark him with a stain of deeper condemnation, if, “after having escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he is again entangled therein, and overcome.”

I am aware, that this view is inconsistent with the supposed certainty, and extent, of the privilege now commonly understood by the word “justification ;” yet I think it is agreeable to the general principle of those, who maintain the contingency of final salvation. In fact, wherever this contingency is admitted, — so long as the sole dependance is placed on the meritorious efficacy of the atonement, — I cannot but think the discrepancies upon the doctrine of justification are rather formal and verbal, than essential ; and easily reconcileable, either by a more precise definition of the term, or by the substitution of some equivalent expression (of which the Scripture furnishes many) to designate the divine act of forgiveness or acquittal.

In this opinion I find myself supported by Barrow, in the sermon under our consideration ; and I cannot resist quoting the passage, as at once corroborative of my own sentiment, and expressive of the peaceable and liberal spirit, in which this sound divine and excellent Christian engages in the ensuing discussion.

Having observed, that the early Christian writers did not enter into nice disquisitions on justification, nor, in fact, consider it as a distinct point of doctrine, he goes on to state the origin of the controversies concerning it, and his own judgment as to the course most likely to lead to their termination.—
“ In the beginning of the Reformation,
“ when the discovery of some great errors
“ (from the corruption and ignorance of
“ former times) crept into vogue, rendered
“ all things the subjects of contention, and
“ multiplied controversies, there did arise
“ hot disputes about this point, and the
“ right stating thereof seemed a matter of
“ great importance ; nor scarce was any

“ controversy prosecuted with greater zeal
“ and earnestness; — whereas, yet, (so far
“ as I can discern,) about the real points of
“ doctrine whereto this word (according to
“ any sense pretended) may relate, there
“ hardly doth appear any material differ-
“ ence; and all the questions depending
“ chiefly seem to consist, about the manner
“ of expressing things which all agree in,
“ or about the extent of the signification of
“ words, capable of a larger or stricter ac-
“ ceptation. Whence, the debates about
“ this point, among all sober and intelligent
“ persons, might (as I conceive) easily be
“ resolved or appeased, if men had a mind
“ to agree, and did not love to wrangle;
“ if, at least, a consent in believing the
“ same things, though under some differ-
“ ence of expression, would content them,
“ so as to forbear strife.”

In proof of this observation, he proceeds to consider the several divine acts, to which the term “justification,” is applicable;— remission of sins, restoration upon repentance,

renewing of the Holy Ghost, sanctification*, &c. "All these acts" (he continues,) "are acknowledged and ascribed unto God; but, with which of them, the act of justification is solely or chiefly coincident,—whether it signifieth barely some one of them, or extendeth to more of them, or comprehendeth them all,—are questions coming under debate, and so, eagerly prosecuted: of which questions, whatever the true resolution be, it cannot, methinks, be of so much consequence, as to cause any great anger or animosity, seeing that all conspire in avowing the *acts*, whatever they be, meant by the word 'justification,' although in other terms."

Though thus desirous to fix the attention rather on things than words, he acknowledges the advantage of precise definition,

* It will be recollected, that Hooker, in his admirable sermon on this doctrine, has carefully distinguished justification from sanctification. In the sequel of this discourse, Barrow makes the same distinction, though he here appears to consider them as synonymous.

for the clearer interpretation of Scripture, “ and the satisfaction of persons considerate “ and peaceable ;” and goes on to examine the various senses of the word “justification,” and to enquire which of them is most consonant to the general scope and object of the Apostle.

“ Following this method,” as he says, he fixes the signification of the word, in St. Paul’s use of it, to the simple act of remission ; and observes, that “ God’s justifying, solely or chiefly, doth import, his “ acquitting us from guilt, condemnation, “ and punishment, by the free pardon “ and remission of our sins ; accounting us, “ and dealing with us, as just persons, “ upright and innocent in his sight and “ esteem.”

Of this dispensation he exhibits a view, which clearly reconciles the free grace of God, with the doctrine of a future probation and responsibility ; and while he describes justification, or remission, as a privilege entirely gratuitous and unmerited, he omits

not the condition (or, if you prefer the word, the circumstance,) which must precede or accompany the individual application of this privilege. I note the passage, chiefly, to observe the consistency of the doctrine of contingent salvation, with that of justification by free grace; and to show, that faith, in the preacher's opinion, should include resolutions and purposes of amendment, and, therefore, may not improperly be described by Tillotson's epithet, of a virtual obedience.

“ God's proceeding with man according
“ to the Gospel, the general tenor thereof
“ doth set out to be this; that God, out
“ of his infinite goodness and mercy, in
“ consideration of what his beloved Son,
“ our blessed Lord, hath performed and
“ suffered, in obedience to his will, and for
“ the redemption of mankind, (which, by
“ transgression of his laws, and defaultance
“ in duty towards him, had grievously of-
“ fended him, and fallen from his favour,
“ was involved in guilt, and stood obnoxious
“ to punishment,) is become reconciled to

“ them (passing by and fully pardoning
“ all offences by them committed against
“ him,) so as generally to *proffer mercy*, upon
“ *certain reasonable and gentle terms*, to all
“ that shall sincerely embrace such over-
“ tures of mercy, and *heartily resolve to*
“ *comply with those terms required by him*;—
“ namely, the returning and adhering to
“ him, forsaking all impiety and iniquity,
“ and constantly persisting in faithful obe-
“ dience to his holy commandments.”

“ This ” (he adds) “ is the proceeding of
“ God ; which the Christian Gospel doth
“ especially set forth, and which, accord-
“ ing to our Lord’s commission and com-
“ mand, his apostles did first preach to
“ man ; as, whosoever will consider the
“ drift and tenor of their preaching, will
“ easily discern ; — which, therefore, St.
“ Paul may reasonably be supposed here
“ to assert, and vindicate against the Jews,
“ and other adversaries of the Gospel ; con-
“ sequently, the terms he useth should be
“ so interpreted as to express that matter.
“ Whence, — being justified, will imply,

“ that which a person embracing the Gospel
 “ doth *immediately* receive from God, in
 “ the way of grace and mercy ; viz. an *ab-*
 “ *solution* from his *former* crimes, an *ac-*
 “ *quittance* from his *debts*, a state of inno-
 “ cence and guiltlessness in God’s sight,
 “ an *exemption* from *vengeance* and punish-
 “ ment.”

The above position he proves, by the apostolic argument of the universal sinfulness of man, and the insufficiency of the law, for the justification of a sinner ; or, rather, of its contrary effect, as a ministry of condemnation ; and thence infers, with St. Paul, that “ a man is justified by faith
 “ only ; or hath absolute need of such a
 “ justification as that which the Gospel de-
 “ clareth and tendereth ;—which justification
 “ must, therefore, import, the receiving that
 “ *free pardon* which the criminal and guilty
 “ world did stand in need of ; — which
 “ the forlorn and deplorable state of man-
 “ kind did groan for ; — without which, no
 “ man could have *any comfort* in his mind,
 “ *any hope*, or any *capacity* for salvation.”

Here, surely, is a statement, which excludes all boasting, or the ascription of a meritorious efficacy to any possible performance of man. Here, justification is plainly described as “the result of Christ’s “redemption, and the act of God consequent thereon;” and remission of sins, is also used indifferently or synonymously, to express the proper and immediate effect of our blessed Saviour’s passion.

We need not follow him in his enumeration of the “phrases equivalent to justification,” farther than to observe, that he includes the imputation of righteousness amongst the number; thus opposing alike, the Popish doctrine of “infusion,” and that of an actual transfer or substitution, which seemed to be implied by some Protestant explications of the term.

On the whole, it appears, that justification is here considered, as the act of admission into the Christian covenant; and, in this sense, it is coupled by the preacher with the doctrine of Baptismal Regener-

ation. On this latter subject, I have already observ'd, that recent jealousies have created a difference, where, probably, little real distinction exists; and that if the precise doctrine were separated from the consequences sometimes attached to it, and the *general* system of the divines who have held it, fairly taken into consideration, a mutual allowance, if not an approximation of judgment on either side, might ensue; except, perhaps, in those extreme cases, (if any such there be,) where the sacrament has been invested with an absolute and unconditional efficacy, or reduced to the character of a rite merely initiatory and external.

Perhaps it will surprise you, as it did me, to find that Luther states this doctrine of baptismal regeneration, — not argumentatively, but expressly, — as a fundamental article of the Christian faith. I mean not to draw from hence, any evidence in its favor, but simply to observe, that it is not a novelty in the history of the Reformation; and that from Luther's well known situation and sentiments, he must have held it in a

sense reconcileable with the possibility, and very general necessity, of a subsequent renovation and conversion. The passage occurs in his commentary on the epistle to the Galatians, chap. 3. ver. 6.

I may also refer you to Calvin's Institutes, (Book 4. chap. 15.) for some observations on this subject, as consistent with the doctrine of our own divines, as they could be, on his principle of special predestination.*

* As some proof of this assertion may be agreeable to those readers who have not Calvin's work at hand, the passages referred to are cited below. They are taken (for more general satisfaction,) from the old translation, mentioned in a former letter.

“ Baptism is a sign of the entering, wherewith we
 “ are received into the fellowship of the Church, that
 “ being *grafted* into Christ, we may be reckoned among
 “ the children of God. Now it was given us of God
 “ to this end, (which I have taught to be common to
 “ all the mysteries,) first, that it should serve to our
 “ faith in him, and to our confession before men.
 “ We will orderly declare the manner of both purposes.
 “ Baptism bringeth three things to our faith,
 “ which also must be severally entreated of. This
 “ is the first which the Lord setteth out unto us, that
 “ it should be a token and proof of our cleansing; or

The conclusion of the sermon we have been examining, clearly exhibits the view

“ (to express my mind better,) it is like to a certain
 “ sealed charter, whereby he confirmeth to us, that all
 “ our sins are so defaced, cancelled, and blotted out,
 “ that they may never more come in his sight, nor be
 “ rehearsed, nor be imputed. For he willeth, that all
 “ they that believe, should be baptized into forgiveness
 “ of sins. Therefore, they which thought that baptism
 “ is nothing else but a mark or token whereby we pro-
 “ fess our religion before men, as soldiers bear the con-
 “ usance of their captain for a mark of their profession,
 “ *weigh not that, which was the chief thing in baptism ;*
 “ that is, this; that we should receive it with this pro-
 “ mise, that whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall
 “ be saved.

“ In this sense is that to be understood, which Paul
 “ writeth, that the Church is sanctified of Christ, her
 “ spouse, and cleansed with washing of water by the
 “ word of life; — and, in another place, that we are
 “ saved according to his mercy, by the washing of re-
 “ generation, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; —
 “ and, that which Peter writeth, that baptism saveth
 “ us. For Paul’s will was not, to signify that our wash-
 “ ing and salvation is *perfectly* made by *water*, or that
 “ water containeth, in *itself*, the power to cleanse, re-
 “ generate, or renew. Neither did Peter mean the
 “ cause of salvation, but only the knowledge and cer-
 “ tainty of such gifts *to be received in this sacrament.*”

Inst. Book 4. Chap. 15. Sec. 1 & 2.

of justification in its two-fold sense, as absolute for the past, and conditional (if I

“ Neither is it to be thought, that baptism is applied
 “ only to the time past, and that for new fallings, into
 “ which we fall back after baptism, we must seek new
 “ remedies of cleansing, in I wot not what other sa-
 “ craments, as *though the force of baptism were worn out*
 “ *of use.* But thus we ought to think, that at *what time*
 “ *soever we be baptized, we are at once washed and cleansed*
 “ *for all our life.* Therefore, so oft as we fall, we must
 “ go back to the remembrance of baptism, and therewith
 “ we must arm our mind, that it may be always certain
 “ and assured of the forgiveness of sins.”

Chap. 15. Sec. 3.

“ It ” (baptism) “ bringeth also another fruit, because
 “ it sheweth us our mortification in Christ, and new
 “ life in him.—For, as the apostle saith, we are bap-
 “ tized into his death, that we may walk in newness of
 “ life. By which words, he doth not only exhort us to
 “ the following of him, (as though he did say, that after
 “ a certain example of the death of Christ, we should
 “ die to our lusts, and after the example of his resur-
 “ rection, we should be raised up to righteousness,) but
 “ he setteth the matter much deeper; — that is to say, that
 “ by baptism, Christ hath made us partakers of his death,
 “ that we may be grafted into it; — and, as the graft
 “ receiveth substance and nourishment, of the root into
 “ which it is grafted, so they that receive baptism with
 “ such faith as they ought, do truly feel the effectual-
 “ ness of the death of Christ, in the mortifying of their

may so speak,) for the future ; — as placing the individual in a state of actual and pre-

“ flesh, and therewithal, also, they feel the effect of his resurrection, in the quickening of the spirit.”

Book 4. Chap. 15. Sec. 5.

In the 16th Chapter, which treats of infant baptism, after an elaborate defence of the practice, by a parallel with the rite of circumcision, we find the following remarkable sentence ; which, however inconsistent it may be thought with the general scheme of Calvin's doctrine, seems fairly to warrant the assertion made above, as to his judgment on this particular question.

“ Though infants, at the same time that they were circumcised, did not comprehend in understanding what that sign meant, yet they were truly circumcised into the mortification of their corrupt and defiled nature ; in which mortification they should afterwards exercise themselves, when they were grown to riper age. Finally, it is very easy to assoile this objection,” (viz. the incapacity of infants to believe and repent,) “ by saying, that they be *baptized into repentance and faith to come ; which, although they be not formed in them, yet, by secret working of the spirit, the seed of both lieth hidden in them.* With this answer at once is overthrown whatever they wrest against us, which they have picked out of the signification of baptism.”

Book 4. Chap. 16. Sec. 20.

sent salvation, “ by the remission of sins
“ that are past,” — “ and assuring his con-
“ tinuance in that state, so long as he holds
“ fast the profession of his faith, without
“ wavering,” — “ so long as he does not for-
“ feit the benefit of that grace, by making
“ shipwreck of faith, and a good con-
“ science.”

Whether this justification import precisely what is now understood by the phrase “ regeneration,” — whether the grace here spoken of, be simply the dispensation of pardon, or the implantation of that spiritual principle which is necessary to the new crea-

It will not be supposed that I cite Calvin, here, as an advocate of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, as it is understood by some of those writers who have opposed it in recent controversies; yet I think the foregoing passages prove, that he associated regeneration in some sense, and even as denoting the principle, or instrumental cause, of a spiritual change of character, with the ordinance of baptism; and, that though he denied the inherent power or virtue of this ordinance, he clearly maintained its sacramental efficacy.

tion of the sinner, — are questions which I am not competent to determine, and which, indeed, I should think not very easily determinable. Yet, so far as the preacher's opinion can be inferred from his association of the terms, he seems to be fairly quoted as an authority, by the later advocates of this doctrine; and his judgment is very decisively stated, when he comes to treat expressly of the sacrament of baptism.

But our concern is with the more important question, of his general doctrine of justification: and I think we have seen, that whether considered as an initiatory, or a final absolution, he has been equally careful to represent it, as proceeding from the impulse of the divine mercy alone, and unattainable, either meritoriously or effectively, by any act or effort of man. The very *capacity* for salvation he has declared to be conferred by redemption, and obtained through faith given us of God; and to this faith only, evinced (where there is time and

opportunity,) by its necessary fruits, has he ascribed any instrumentality towards justification or salvation, from the commencement, to the close, of the Christian life.

LETTER XXX.

BARROW.

SERMON ON THE PASSION. — ITS PECULIAR CHARACTER —
 EXTRACTS. — FULL STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF
 HUMAN CORRUPTION, REPEATED. — NECESSITY AND
 SUFFICIENCY OF THE ATONEMENT MADE BY CHRIST. —
 APPLICATION. — USES OF THE CONSIDERATION OF THIS
 DOCTRINE. — EXTRACTS. — BARROW'S USE OF PHILOSO-
 PHICAL AND CLASSICAL AUTHORITIES. — HIS MILD-
 NESS. — AVERSENESS TO POLITICAL CONTROVERSY. —
 CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN the sermon on justifying faith, Barrow had observed, that this faith hath a peculiar reference to that part of Christian truth, which concerns the merciful intentions of God towards mankind, and the gracious performances of our Saviour, in order to their accomplishment; and I have selected his memorable sermon upon the passion of our Lord, as exhibiting at once, his view of this stupendous sacrifice, and the feelings

excited in his mind by the contemplation of it.

In this noble discourse, we find the perfection of Christian eloquence : — not the minute and verbal accuracy of the rhetorician, but the “thoughts that breathe, and words that burn,” in the productions of the true and natural orator ; or rather, the ardent effusions of a heart overflowing with divine love, the holy inspirations of a tongue touched with a coal from the altar. It not a little increases the effect of this fine burst of pious feeling, to observe that it seems in a manner involuntary ; and is strikingly contrasted with the habitually calm and argumentative style of the preacher ; and it awakens a delightful, though deeply solemn interest, to reflect that it was his *last** ministerial exertion ; — that the eye of faith, which under all its present mysteriousness, could so intensely fix upon the cross, was so soon

* This sermon was the last composed by Dr. Barrow, and was preached not quite three weeks before his death.

to be purged of its mortal film, and admitted to behold, "face to face," the glory of that Redeemer, whose humiliation it had so lately contemplated.

Under such an impression, it is, perhaps, impossible to consider this sermon, abstractedly from the strong personal feeling which it excites. Our object, however, limits us to the examination of its doctrinal character, and will be best attained by a simple statement of the plan, and the citation of a few extracts.

The plan includes an enquiry into the object of this dispensation of redemption, with its peculiar fitness to accomplish that object, (which is traced minutely in the various circumstances of our Lord's character and sufferings;) — and closes with a view of the practical efficacy of "the doctrine of the cross," as a source of spiritual comfort, an incentive to holiness and virtue, and an excitement to the devout and benevolent affections.

In the fine exordium, the doctrine of human depravity is stated without reserve or palliation, as the very ground and foundation of the Christian system; and from hence is deduced a proof of the necessity of redemption, and of the agency of God himself, to effect it.

After a Scriptural demonstration of this fundamental truth, that man, in his natural state, was lost, and alienated from God, and unable to effect, or even to seek, a reconciliation, he thus describes the stupendous scheme which it pleased the divine mercy to devise for his recovery.

“ When this was our forlorn and desperate case, then Almighty God, out of his infinite goodness, was pleased to look upon us, with an eye of pity and mercy, so as graciously to design a redemption for us, out of that woeful distress; and no sooner by his incomprehensible wisdom, did he foresee that we should lose ourselves, than by his immense grace, he did conclude to restore us.”

“ But how could this happy design well
“ be compassed? How, in consistence with
“ the glory, with the justice, with the truth
“ of God, could such enemies be recon-
“ ciled, such offenders be pardoned, such
“ wretches be saved? Would the omnipo-
“ tent Majesty, so affronted, deign to treat
“ with his rebels immediately, without an
“ intercessor or an advocate? Would the
“ Sovereign Governor of the world suffer
“ so notoriously his right to be violated,
“ his authority to be slighted, his honour
“ to be trampled on, without some notable
“ vindication or satisfaction? Would the
“ great Patron of justice relax the terms of
“ it, or ever permit a gross breach thereof
“ to pass with impunity? Would the im-
“ mutable God of truth expose his veracity
“ or his constancy, to suspicion, by so re-
“ versing that peremptory sentence of
“ death upon sinners, that it should not in a
“ sort eminently be accomplished? Would
“ the most righteous and most holy God
“ let slip an opportunity so advantageous,
“ for demonstrating his perfect love of in-
“ nocence, and abhorrence of iniquity?

“ Could we, therefore, well be cleared from
“ our guilt, without an expiation, or re-
“ instated in freedom, without a ransom, or
“ exempted from condemnation, without
“ some punishment ?”

“ No ! God was so pleased to prosecute
“ his designs of goodness and mercy, as
“ thereby nowise to impair or obscure, but
“ rather to advance and illustrate, the
“ glories of his sovereign dignity, of his
“ severe justice, of his unchangeable steady-
“ ness in word and purpose. He accord-
“ ingly would be sued to for peace and
“ mercy ; nor would he grant them abso-
“ lutely, without due compensation for the
“ wrongs he had sustained ; yet so, that
“ his goodness did find us a mediator, and
“ furnish us with means to satisfy him. He
“ would not condescend to a simple remis-
“ sion of our debts ; yet so, that, saving
“ his right and honour, he did stoop still
“ lower for an effectual abolition of them.
“ He would make good his word, not to
“ let our trespasses go unpunished ; yet so,
“ that by our punishment we might receive

“ advantage. He would manifest his de-
“ testation of wickedness, in a way more
“ illustrious, than if he had persecuted it
“ down to hell, and irreversibly doomed
“ it to endless torment.”

“ But how might these things be effected?
“ Where was there a mediator proper and
“ worthy to intercede for us? Who could
“ presume to solicit and plead in our be-
“ half? Who should dare to put himself
“ between God and us, or to offer to screen
“ mankind from the divine wrath and ven-
“ geance? Who had so great an interest
“ in the court of heaven, as to ingratiate
“ such a brood of apostate enemies thereto?
“ Who could assume the confidence to pro-
“ pose terms of reconciliation, or to agitate
“ a new covenant, wherewith God might
“ be satisfied, and whereby man might be
“ saved? Where, in heaven or earth,
“ could there be found a priest fit to atone
“ for sins so vastly numerous, so extremely
“ heinous? And whence should a sacri-
“ fice be taken, of value sufficient to ex-
“ piate for so manifold enormities, com-

“ mitted against the infinite Majesty of
“ Heaven? Who could find out the ever-
“ lasting redemption of innumerable souls,
“ and lay down a competent ransom for
“ them all? Not to say, who could pur-
“ chase for them eternal life and bliss?”

“ No creature might aspire to so august
“ an honour. None could achieve so mar-
“ vellous a work, as to redeem from infinite
“ guilt and misery, the noblest part of all
“ the visible creation! None could pre-
“ sume to invade that high prerogative of
“ God, or attempt to infringe the truth of
“ that reiterated proclamation,—‘I, even I,
“ am the Lord, and beside me there is no
“ Saviour!’ ”

The excellencé of this extract, makes any apology for the length of it, unnecessary. I must refer you to the volume, for the farther detail of our Lord’s incarnation, ministry, and death, with the observations upon the wisdom and propriety of the scheme of redemption in all its parts, and proceed to the practical application.

No abridgment could do justice to this admirable portion of the discourse, and detached extracts will weaken it by breaking the order and connection. Yet a little of both must be attempted, as it is here, especially, that we trace the personal feelings and character of the preacher.

The consideration of the doctrine of the cross, as applicable to Christian practice, he describes, as useful for the excitement of gratitude, of faith, of spiritual joy, of humility, of trust in God, of hatred of sin, of penitence; — and farther, as an incentive to the practice of love and charity, to an indifference and contempt for worldly vanities, a cheerful submission to the divine will, a patient endurance of afflictions, and, above all, an open and magnanimous acknowledgment of this stupendous mystery of our religion, which was “to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness;” but “is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.”

Under each of these heads, in directing the meditations of his reader, he seems to pour out the fulness of his own pious soul ; and exhibits such an exquisite view of the graces and consolations of Christianity, as nothing less than a deep and personal experience could convey.

If, even upon a general principle of criticism, evident to natural taste and good sense, it was thought necessary to be a virtuous man, in order to be a great orator, it is eminently necessary to be a *pious* man, in order to deserve the character of a Christian orator ; and nothing more strikingly illustrates this, than the instinctive discrimination, with which we often infer the personal characters of writers on religion, from the peculiarities of their respective compositions. I am, perhaps, a little enthusiastic in the application of this principle, to Barrow ; and I allow, that it is dangerous to establish such an instinct, as a general criterion of sincerity, where other sources of information are defective. Yet it is, in

most cases, an involuntary impression, and anticipates, if it does not preclude, the deliberate exercise of the judgment. Like the electric power, it operates instantly and irresistibly; and, with a moral force more mighty than this first of physical agents, it not only elicits the spark of congenial virtue, but seems to awaken the dormant principle of spiritual life and feeling, even when benumbed by constitutional apathy, or sometimes perhaps apparently extinguished by sensual or careless habits.

But I must proceed to our extracts; or Barrow will occupy a larger portion of our time, than even my partiality would allow him. I shall take the subjects as they occur in the above enumeration; and first, the efficacy of the doctrine of the cross, in the excitement of love and gratitude to God.

“That God the Father should design
“ such a redemption for us, — not sparing
“ his own Son, the Son of his love, dear to
“ him, as himself, but delivering him up

“ *for us*, to be so dealt with for our sake, —
 “ that God would endure to see his Son in
 “ so pitiful a condition, to hear him groan-
 “ ing under so grievous pressures, to let
 “ him be so horribly abused ;—and *that*, —
 “ *for us*, who had deserved nothing from
 “ him, — who had demerited so much
 “ against him ;—*for us*, who were no
 “ friends to him, (for even when we were
 “ *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by
 “ the death of his Son,) — who were not
 “ any way commendable for goodness or
 “ righteousness, (for Christ did suffer for
 “ *sinner*s, the just for the unjust; and God
 “ commended his love towards us, that
 “ while we were yet *sinful*, Christ died for
 “ us;) — that God should thus *love us*, send-
 “ ing his Son to be a propitiation for *our*
 “ sins, in so dismal a way of suffering,—
 “ how stupendous is that goodness ! how
 “ vast an obligation doth it lay upon us to
 “ reciprocal affection !”—“ If a Jew were
 “ commanded by law, if a Gentile were
 “ obliged by nature, to love God with all
 “ his heart, and with all his soul, — what
 “ affection doth a Christian, under the

“ law of duty and grace, owe unto him!
 “ By what computation can we reckon that
 “ debt? What faculties have we, sufficient
 “ to discharge it? What finite heart can
 “ hold an affection commensurate to such
 “ an obligation ?”

“ And how can it otherwise than inflame
 “ our hearts with love toward the blessed
 “ Son of God, our Saviour, to consider,
 “ that merely out of charitable pity toward
 “ us, he purposely came down from heaven,
 “ and took our flesh upon him, that he
 “ might therein undergo those extreme
 “ acerbities of pain, and those most ugly
 “ indignities of shame, *for us?*”—“ If love,
 “ naturally be productive of love, if friend-
 “ ship justly meriteth a correspondence in
 “ good will, what effect should the con-
 “ sideration of so ineffable a love, of so
 “ unparalleled a friendship, have upon us?”

And — “ What surer ground can there be
 “ of faith in God, what stronger encourage-
 “ ment of hope, than is suggested by this
 “ consideration? For, if God stedfastly did

“ hold his purpose, and faithfully did ac-
“ accomplish his word, in an instance so
“ distasteful, how can we ever suspect his
“ constancy and fidelity in any case? How
“ can we distrust the completion of any
“ Divine promise?”—“ What higher kind-
“ ness could God express, what lower
“ condescension could he vouchsafe? By
“ what pledge, could he more clearly or
“ surely testify his willingness and delight
“ to do us good?”

“ If the greatness of our sins discour-
“ rageth us from entertaining comfortable
“ hopes of mercy, will it not rear our hearts
“ to consider that such a punishment hath
“ been inflicted, to expiate them, which
“ might content the most rigorous severity?
“ — that such a price is laid down to redeem
“ us from the curse, which richly might
“ suffice to discharge it? — that such a sa-
“ crifice hath been offered, which God hath
“ avowed, for most available, and acceptable
“ to himself?”—“ Whatever the wounds
“ of our conscience may be, is' not the
“ blood of the cross, temper'd with our

“ hearty repentance, and applied by a lively
“ faith; a sovereign balsam, of virtue suffi-
“ cient to cure them? And may we not
“ by his stripes be healed? And have we
“ not abundant reason, with the apostle,
“ to joy in God, through our Lord Jesus
“ Christ, by whom we have received the
“ atonement?

“ It may indeed yield great joy and
“ sprightly consolation to us, to contemplate
“ our Lord upon the cross, exercising his
“ immense charity and love toward us;
“ transacting all the work of our redemp-
“ tion, defeating all the enemies, and
“ evacuating all the obstacles, of our sal-
“ vation.”

“ To the external view and carnal sense
“ of men, our Lord was then indeed ex-
“ posed to scorn and shame; but to
“ spiritual and sincere discerning, all his
“ and our enemies, did there hang up as
“ objects of contempt, utterly overthrown
“ and undone.”

The fine prosopopœia that follows, is too long to extract, and would be spoiled by curtailings: we will therefore proceed to the next grace (that of humility,) to be derived from this contemplation of the cross.

“ This consideration is most useful, to
 “ render us very humble, and sensible of
 “ our weakness, our vileness, our wretched-
 “ ness. For how low was that fall, from
 “ which we could not be raised, without
 “ such a depression of God’s only Son !
 “ How great is that impotency, which did
 “ need such a succour to relieve it ! How
 “ abominable must be that iniquity, which
 “ might not be expiated without so costly
 “ a sacrifice ! How deplorable is that misery,
 “ which could not be removed without com-
 “ mutation of so strange a suffering ! Would
 “ the Son of God have so *emptied* and
 “ abased himself for nothing ? Would he
 “ have endured such pains and ignominies
 “ for a trifle ? No, surely. — If our guilt
 “ had been slight, if our case had been
 “ tolerable, the Divine wisdom would have
 “ chosen a more cheap and easy remedy ! ”

“ Is it not madness, for us to be con-
 “ ceited of any worth in ourselves, to con-
 “ fide in any merit of our works, to glory
 “ in any thing belonging to us, to fancy our-
 “ selves brave, fine, happy persons, worthy
 “ of great respect and esteem, — where-
 “ as our unworthiness, our demerit, our
 “ forlorn state, did extort from the most
 “ gracious God, a displeasure needing such
 “ a reconciliation, — did impose on the
 “ most glorious Son of God, a necessity
 “ to undergo such a punishment in our
 “ behalf?”

Of the other virtues, religious, personal,
 and social, which this doctrine of the Cross
 is calculated to foster and excite, we have
 a delineation equally animated: but so much
 only, is applicable to our present object, and
 I must hasten to the close of these observ-
 ations, which have already exceeded the
 proposed limits.

The acknowledged authority of Barrow
 as a divine, may seem to have made any
 introduction of his name, in the way of

vindication, superfluous. But, as he holds a distinguished rank amongst our philosophical preachers, and is at once an advocate, and an example, of the free use of reason in religious discussions, and the application of human learning, to the illustration of his sacred subject, I have been anxious to bring him forward, as an example of the compatibility of these practices, with an implicit submission to Scripture, upon those high and mysterious doctrines, which are utterly inscrutable to the human faculties, and must rest for their evidence, upon the divine testimony alone.

Of Barrow's truly Christian use of the philosophical and classical authorities, to which he occasionally refers in the way of illustration, instances might be cited from many of his practical discourses. I shall, however, only refer you to two, upon "The Profitableness of Godliness;" where he proves the superiority of piety to philosophy, as it were upon the evidence of philosophy herself; and prefaces the citation of various axioms of heathen or natural wis-

dom and morality, with the remarkable observation, that in its fruit, as well as in its principle, piety is the only true wisdom, — the only source of rational happiness, or of independent and consistent virtue.

“ The pious man is the exquisite philosopher.” — “ All the philosophical bravados concerning a wise man’s being only rich, only honourable, only happy, only above fortune, are verified in the pious man. To him alone, *as such*, with a sure foundation, without vanity, and with evident reason, those aphorisms may be applied. They are *paradoxes* and *fictions* abstracting from religion, or considering man only under the light and power of nature. But, supposing our religion to be true, a good Christian, soberly, without arrogance, in proportion, and according to, the measure of his piety, may assume them to himself, as the holy apostles did. — I possess all things ; — I can do all things ; — he may in a sort say with St. Paul.”

Of the body of doctrinal and practical instruction, which the expositions of the Creed and the Decalogue contain, I shall only observe, that it is entirely in accordance with the principles laid down in the foregoing extracts ; and may be considered as an admirable text-book for private instruction or public admonition. I would notice more particularly (if our limits permitted,) four excellent discourses on the Doctrine of Universal Redemption ; in which this great truth is vindicated and explained with equal force and clearness, and without the polemical asperity which we find in some other doctrinal discussions of that period.

It is, in fact, a peculiarity in the character of Barrow, that he seems to stand, as it were, *above* the controversial atmosphere ; and in the explication of Christian principles, to fix his eye entirely upon Scripture ; adverting but incidentally, and always unwillingly, to polemical differences or divisions.

One farther observation I must make, as illustrative at once of the dignity of his mind, and the meekness of his character. At a period when political and theological controversy appeared to be almost inseparable, and under the impression of personal recollections which must have strongly biassed his political principles, he seems to have carefully avoided all allusion to this irritating subject. Even in a sermon preached on the anniversary of the Restoration, where it appeared to be almost called for, by the service of the day, it is remarkable, that, in alluding to the sufferings of good kings, under the divine judgments for the sins of the people, he makes no reference to the case of Charles the First: an omission, which clearly is not attributable to any want of respect for the memory of that unfortunate monarch. Towards the close of the sermon, indeed, he states his principles explicitly, in his thanksgiving for the re-establishment of civil and ecclesiastical order; and adverts to "the misdemeanors of persons in the late times," but in very calm and moderate language. His

allusions to the existing domestic divisions, chiefly bear upon the general immorality and impiety, by which the period subsequent to the Restoration, was disgraced.

It cannot, indeed, be denied, that he speaks of the reigning monarch, in terms more laudatory, than the evidence of history has warranted. But it should be recollected, that the worst features in the character of Charles the Second, did not unfold themselves, till towards the close of his reign; and that, throughout the whole of it, his insinuating and popular qualities rendered it difficult to judge him with impartiality.

Barrow's high respect for the civil authorities of his country, upon a principle of religious duty, may also have contributed to give strength to these closing observations. But does it not make his forbearance upon other occasions, the more admirable, to observe that it was not the result of any indecision of principle, but the genuine fruit of a pacific and Christian spirit?

Of the other divines who immediately succeeded the Restoration, and who have maintained some portion of their popularity, to the present times, (for with such only we are concerned,) it would be impossible, within the compass of a moderate correspondence, to attempt either an enumeration or an analysis. I will try, however, so far as our documents allow, and my acquaintance with them, enables me, to trace in my next, the influence of the then existing controversies, in forming the style, or determining the subjects, of our popular divinity.

Adieu.

LETTER XXXI.

SOUTH.

REASONS FOR HAVING OMITTED THE NAME OF SOUTH. — CHARACTER OF HIS PREACHING. — REMARKS ON THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINES. — DEFICIENCY OF SOUTH IN THIS POINT. — HARSHNESS OF HIS PRACTICAL STYLE. — TENDERNESS OF THE GOSPEL, ITS GREAT CHARM. — APPROPRIATE PULPIT-STYLE. — CIRCUMSTANCES MAY REQUIRE A VARIATION. — THIS DEFENCE APPLICABLE TO SOUTH, BUT NO EXCUSE FOR HIS SEVERITY AND PARTY SPIRIT. — CHARACTERISTIC DIFFERENCE, IN THE SERMONS OF SOUTH AND TILLOTSON. — EFFECT OF THE RECENT DIVISIONS, UPON PULPIT-COMPOSITIONS AT THIS PERIOD. — CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CANNOT allow you to tax me with an unfair or jesuitical proceeding, in not having mentioned the name of South, with those of Tillotson and Barrow; though I do not deny that the omission was intentional; and am, moreover, obliged to confess, that his writings do not, in my judgment, (any more than in yours,) support the cause

which I am anxious to establish. I must, however, beg of you to recollect, that I proposed only a *partial* vindication of the divines to whom you indiscriminately objected; and meant not to enter into a general criticism, nor to attempt a regular enumeration of them.

The observations upon Tillotson and Barrow, have extended to a length so much greater than I expected, that I shall not be able to afford many niches for their venerable contemporaries; and must leave you to pursue the more general examination (if you shall feel so inclined,) upon the principles which I have there suggested.

As I dare not, however, after your charge, omit the name of South, I cannot place him better, than next to his celebrated associates: — not, indeed, with any design of instituting a comparison between them; much less of representing him as one of those divines, who have been (in my mind) rather arbitrarily charged, with preaching a philosophic and diluted Christianity.

Plausibly, and perhaps justly, as the sermons of South might be defended, upon the ground of doctrine, I confess that there is much in the general character of his preaching, which, on our principles, I cannot vindicate. Yet, that you may not infer from this acknowledgment, a larger concession than I intend to make, I will give you, as concisely as possible, the observations which occur to me upon his general character, and upon the defects, which, in my opinion, diminish the usefulness, and obstruct the popularity, of these very able discourses.

In truth, though I believe the keen wit and scholastic acuteness of South, adapted him particularly for the times in which he lived, and qualified him for the exposure of vice, and the confutation of infidelity, in a court where milder tempers and more evangelical arguments would have failed to command attention, I must freely resign him to you, as open to all the objections which you have stated ; — if he be not liable to the still more serious charge, of having

borrowed his divinity rather from the schools, than the Scriptures : — not that I mean to impute to him any intentional perversion of Scripture, or deviation from the principles of the Church — (for, on the contrary, I believe he is studiously orthodox in his doctrine,) — but that I think his writings exhibit peculiarly, that want of spirituality, in practical application and inference, which arises from the habit of considering the doctrinal truths of Christianity as subjects of merely speculative or critical discussion, and dwelling rather upon the abstract principle, than upon its relative influence and application.

It is an excellent observation (I forget whose), that “the mysteries of our religion should always be viewed, in connection with their bearing upon our spiritual wants and necessities.” He, who learns to consider the doctrine of the Trinity in conjunction with his own hopes in time and in eternity, — who dares to approach the offended justice of his Maker, only under the protecting mediation of his Redeemer, — and, in the deep consciousness of hereditary and actual pollu-

tion, feels the inestimable value of that grace which it is the office of the Holy Spirit to bestow,—will be little disturbed with metaphysical subtleties of explication, upon the essence and subsistences of an infinite, an incomprehensible Deity. Turning from speculations in which his understanding is bewildered, as well by the immensity of the object, as by its abstraction from all those mediate ideas with which he endeavours to assist his feeble apprehension, he will humbly contemplate “the unknown God,” through the medium of his revealed attributes and appellations. Leaving “the secret things which belong unto the Lord,”—the deep and mysterious spiritualities of his essence, which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,”—he will view his almighty power and wisdom, in the wonders of creation and of providence;—he will trace his peculiar mercy to man in the gracious manifestation of a Saviour, — and adore his transcendent purity and holiness, in the revelation of that sanctifying Spirit, on whose influence he depends for consolation here,

and meetness for the promised glory hereafter. In the variety of these divine exhibitions, he will mark the reality of those distinctions in the Godhead, which he finds revealed in the Scriptures ; — in their harmony, he will discover that sublime character of unity, which belongs emphatically to the God of revelation, and which the boasted light of philosophy has never so explicitly disclosed, and probably would never have so clearly discerned, without the aid of an express and traditional communication, — and finally, in their close and intimate connection with his own wants, and hopes, and aspirations, he will see and grasp the golden chain, that links him with the invisible world, and removes at once the mysterious incongruity of his more spiritual and discursive faculties, with the gross and material necessities of his animal nature.

The great deficiency which we find in perusing the doctrinal sermons of South, is the total absence of this relative application. The mystery of the Trinity, is, indeed, asserted as a fundamental doctrine of Chris-

tianity ; but it is discussed rather as a metaphysical problem, than as an authoritative truth ; and a scheme of illustration is proposed, which would go near to annihilate the personality of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is not, indeed, as the author confesses, “ offered as a full explication, “ much less as a just representation, of this “ great mystery ;” which he acknowledges to be inconceivably above the reach of every human intellect, and to rest exclusively upon the testimony of Scripture. It is, therefore, more fair to judge him by his final declaration, “ that there are three “ above the rank of created beings, the “ Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ;” and that “ as for such high mysteries, as “ the Trinity, and the subsistence of one “ nature in three persons, and of three persons in one and the same individual nature, these are to be reckoned in the “ number of such sacred and secret things, “ as belong to God alone perfectly to know, “ but to such poor mortals as we are, hum- “ bly to fall down before and adore.”

The practical deductions, from the various offices and attributes ascribed to the respective persons in the Holy Trinity, are evidently more appropriate subjects for the pulpit, than the depths of this mysterious doctrine: and I look upon it to have been a great disadvantage attending the divinity of the period in question, that the necessity of arguing this doctrine polemically, sometimes superseded its practical use; while the fashion of pulpit controversy, familiarized the popular mind with cavils and objections, which the preacher was forced to state, in order to refute them, and which would never have disturbed the tranquillity, nor, perhaps, occurred to the imagination, of the pious and practical reader of his Bible. In the sermons of Tillotson, we have found this disadvantage much abated, if not altogether obviated, by the fervency of his devotion, and the frequency of his practical deductions and exhortations. In the few amongst those of South, which relate to this doctrine, we have little more than the scholastic argument of a scholastic question, restricted to its metaphysical and abstract

form, and apparently separated from those moral inferences, which a view of its bearing upon some other doctrines of Revelation would suggest.

On the sacrifice and satisfaction of our blessed Lord,—that inestimable truth which blends itself so intimately with every principle of Christian duty, — the same deficiency of application is observable. The full and implicit admission of this truth, as a point of speculative belief, is, indeed, earnestly inculcated : but its reception into the heart as a principle of holiness, — its influence upon the affections as a motive to gratitude, — its humbling, and corrective, and purifying efficacy, — its pre-eminent importance, as the only anchor of hope, the only sure ground of dependance for salvation, — all these 'legitimate and necessary deductions, are either omitted, or very cursorily marked ; and moral obligation is too often built, on the principles of reason and of natural religion : — both, necessary, indeed, and excellent in their place, but rather to be urged as corroborative, than fundamental,

Connected with this deficiency in the statement of the doctrine of redemption, or rather in the practical use of it, we find (I think) a very low view of the office and influence of the Holy Spirit; and a strong insinuation of a remaining sufficiency in man, to perform his duty with much less of supernatural help, than the Scriptures declare to be necessary. This defect is particularly to be observed as pervading the practical sermons, and may have arisen from a zeal to oppose some prevalent exaggerations. Yet I do not recollect that the doctrine is any where stated, otherwise than incidentally and generally; and I am inclined to believe, that no preacher, who held it in what we are accustomed to consider as its full and Scriptural extent, would be satisfied with such a statement. This seems a very uncharitable conclusion, and inconsistent with my favourite principle of lenient interpretation: but I feel so deeply, the importance of this great truth to the encouragement of all moral exertion (though I acknowledge the facility of its abuse), that I would always see it clearly and prominently exhibited.

But the peculiarity which will most forcibly strike the reader, who opens the volumes of South, in search of Christian instruction, is the infrequency of Scripture citations and references, — the exhibition of the principles of religion, in the language of a cold and systematic theology, — and the expression of its precepts and prohibitions, in the harsh and antithetical style of disputation ; — his absence of that deep and affectionate sensibility, which wins the heart, while it awakens the conscience ; — and the appearance of a sort of contemptuous indifference to the spiritual welfare of those, who shall remain unconvinced by his demonstrations.

It is its exquisite tenderness of feeling, that renders the character of the Gospel so interesting, and at once strikes conviction and compunction to the callous heart of the sinner. It is this feeling, that uniformly pervades the specimens which remain to us of apostolic preaching, and softens the severity of necessary and faithful reproof, with the tear of pity, and the urgency of

affectionate entreaty. It is this feeling, that eminently distinguishes the divinity of Taylor and Baxter, and has maintained the popularity of their practical writings, with all classes of Christian readers to whom they are known. And it is, perhaps, the observation of this feeling alone, that can sooth the irritability of wounded pride, and reconcile it to the friendly severity of an honest and uncompromising preacher of the Gospel.

The deficiency of the sermons of South, in this endearing, and (as I may call it) evangelical quality, may be traced, I think, to two causes: — first, the fashion of speculative and polemical theology, which the recent divisions in the Church had introduced; and, secondly, to the fact, that most of these sermons were delivered, either before the university, or the court, where a more argumentative and elaborate style of composition might have been expected, than would suit a mixed, or generally illiterate, congregation. As there is, however, much of this quality in many of the ser-

mons of Tillotson, preached nearly at the same time, and, probably, to the same auditory, we must also trace the deficiency in South, to those peculiarities of character and temper, which are recorded of him in the biography of that period, and which, indeed, are sufficiently exhibited in his writings.

It is a principle of true taste, as well as of piety, that precludes all display of wit or humour in the pulpit ; and banishes from its solemn and sacred offices, even the lighter and more imaginative graces of composition. A mind duly impressed with the awfulness of eternal things, will generally treat them with a corresponding seriousness ; and will even, as far as circumstances permit, reject the “enticing words “of man’s wisdom.” or fancy, which, however applicable to subjects of inferior dignity and interest, are here, not only unnecessary, but injurious. Independently of the religious associations connected with it, the transcendent excellence of the Scripture style, consists in the union of sublimity of thought, with simplicity of expression and

illustration: and, in proportion to the diligence with which this style is imitated, (not in the affectation of a peculiar phraseology, but in the transfusion of its chaste and dignified simplicity, and strict subordination of expression, to sense, of form, to substance,) will be the excellence, and generally the success, of the Christian preacher.

There are, however, circumstances, in which this excellence may be less appreciated, and consequently less successful, than a style of a more mixed and secular character: and, if we may defend upon this ground, much of the classical and metaphysical illustration which has been objected to, in some of the divines of this period, we may, perhaps, suggest the same apology, for the indulgence of that sarcastic wit which distinguished the character of South, and often marks his discourses. In a court, where the truths of Christianity were too generally disregarded or disbelieved, — where religion was commonly identified with the imputation of dullness, and profligacy was

united with the character of wit and spirit, — it may have been useful sometimes, to show that these were not necessary associations ; and that it was possible to be a Christian in principle, and a moralist in practice, without renouncing the reputation, or the exercise, of that intellectual superiority, which infidelity is so apt to arrogate to itself. And, let me add, that the strong and poignant satire which exhibited the folly, as well as the turpitude, of sin, may have sometimes operated upon the pride, of those whose hearts were inaccessible through the avenues of the conscience, or the understanding.

I would not be understood to defend even the occasional use of a style, which I think scarcely, in any case, allowable: and, however this 'peculiarity' of character in South, may have fitted him for the peculiar exigencies of his time, I am inclined to think it unfits him in a great degree for general perusal, and weakens his authority as a practical guide, as much as it diminishes his usefulness as a literary model. I must,

moreover, observe, that a certain coarseness of expression and imagery, pervades his moral expostulations ; which, if it does not indicate in the preacher, a mind but imperfectly purified by Christianity, is not likely to improve, and will too often offend, the feelings and taste of a delicate reader.

But the great objection to the sermons of South, and the character which most unfits them for permanent usefulness and popularity, is the acrimonious spirit in which they are generally composed. Whatever be the subject under discussion, whether a heresy or a vice, the application is invariably made to particular persons or parties ; and, even where neither vice nor heresy can be imputed, the unfortunate question of conformity affords an endless topic of vituperation. We should, perhaps, be more inclined to excuse this indiscriminate severity in South, if he had been one of those who had suffered under the recent usurpation. But we cannot forget the panegyrist of Cromwell, in the eulogist of a church which Cromwell subverted ; nor reconcile

the consistency of his early acquiescence, with his subsequent and bitter enmity to the principles of its opponents. You will not suppose me to question here, the possibility of a conscientious change of opinion, or the imperative duty of avowing it : but the Gospel presents so different a view of the temper and feeling with which such a change should be attended, that while we contrast the severity of the preacher, with the tenderness of the Apostle, (who could bear witness to the zeal of his brethren, though he could not approve their judgment,) we are led to recollect, and to apply, the remarkable reproof of our Lord, — “ Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” Oh, may we apply it in meekness ! and may we recollect it to our own edification, when the prejudices of early association and attachment, would lead us to a monopoly of the knowledge of divine truth, and the privileges of salvation !

The difference of character, in Tillotson and South, is remarkable in the difference of their controversial sermons. Tillotson

seems to have breathed with pain in the atmosphere of controversy, and to have been perpetually struggling to escape from it, to the safe and firm ground of vital and practical Christianity. South appears to expatiate in it, as his native and favourite element; and, however general or practical his ostensible subject may be, seldom fails to combine it with some point of polemical jealousy: and (what is peculiarly symptomatic of this controversial spirit,) dwells with as much energy and emphasis, upon questions of local and domestic division, as upon those vital and fundamental truths, which are the main pillars of Christianity, and might be made the ground of Christian and catholic unity, without any desertion from the national Church, or any dereliction of the natural and hereditary preference for the worship and the discipline of our fathers.

You are not to understand me here, as pleading the cause of non-conformity; which I lament, not only in its direct, but in its more remote and collateral, effects:

and in which, with much piety and uprightness of intention, I cannot but acknowledge a general pertinacity of opinion, and an excessive scrupulousness in matters of little importance. How far the irritability of perpetual controversy, will gradually lead to the exaggeration of such scruples, on the one hand, and of the system opposed to them, on the other, it is curious to trace, in the history of our Church, from Cranmer and Hooper, to the disputants of the Commonwealth and the Restoration.

A distinction in the style and character of preaching—the establishment, as it were, of different schools,—I have already noticed, as one of the common results of divisions of religious party. From various unfortunate associations at this time, it appears, that the familiar use of Scripture language, even in the explication of Scripture doctrine, had been brought into discredit with the zealous friends of the government; as liable to perversion, and as having been recently made instrumental to factious and seditious designs. Under this impression

perhaps it is, that in some of the more elaborate sermons of South, where he forms his doctrine into any regularity of scheme, we find a reference rather to human systems and compilations, than to the simple authority of Scripture: and in his view of the qualifications necessary for the ministerial office, an acquaintance with the Bible holds but a secondary place, to an intimacy with “councils, schoolmen, and “fathers.”

In this prejudice, his great contemporaries whom I have named, do not appear to have participated: and Tillotson particularly, urges “the diligent reading of the “Scriptures,” as “more likely to establish “right notions of religious doctrines, than “all the controversial writings of divines.”

I did not intend to have said so much of a writer, whom, on our principles, I cannot praise, and dare not very minutely criticise. Yet it would be unjust not to add, that his sermons abound in bright and striking ideas, forcible illustrations, and convincing argu-

ments ; and are said to have been eminently instrumental, in the exposure of the corrupt principles and profligate practice, against which they were commonly directed.

Adieu !

LETTER XXXII.

BEVERIDGE.

REASONS FOR HAVING OMITTED THE NAME OF BISHOP BEVERIDGE. — CHARACTER OF HIS SERMONS. — PARTICULAR LESSON TO BE DRAWN FROM THEM. — CHARACTERISTIC DISTINCTION BETWEEN BEVERIDGE AND BARROW. — BIOGRAPHICAL REMARKS. — LABORIOUS MINISTRY OF BISHOP BEVERIDGE. — REASONS FOR DWELLING UPON HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER. — INJURY ARISING, FROM THE POPULAR APPLICATION OF THE TERM EVANGELICAL. — THE TERM FAIRLY APPLICABLE, TO EVERY FAITHFUL MINISTER OF A SCRIPTURAL CHURCH; AND DESCRIPTIVE OF CHARACTER, RATHER THAN OF OPINION. — CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It was not undesignedly, that I omitted to specify the names of Taylor and Beveridge, in conjunction with those of the eminent preachers who have been the subjects of our late observations; but because I considered the former, as belonging to an earlier period, and the latter, as excepted, by an almost universal consent, from the censure which has been thrown upon some of his

most celebrated contemporaries. I am not, however, sorry to be led, by your notice of this omission, to a nearer consideration of the character of this excellent prelate ; in which, indeed, I discern such truly evangelical features, as I think must recommend it to the love and imitation, of the pious of all parties and professions.

I find, moreover, in the admirable sermons of Beveridge, a strong confirmation of the sentiment which is so deeply impressed upon my mind, (and which in truth first led me into this discussion,) — that we know not what manner of spirit we are of, when we quarrel for differences of explication, or opinion, upon points obscure, indefinite, or unimportant ; and still less, when we measure the faith of our brethren, considered as a vital principle, by the preciseness of their agreement with our favourite authorities, or question their belief of the fundamental doctrines of our religion, because they do not see them exactly with our eyes, or receive them through the medium of our understandings.

This confirmation I draw not from the perception of any doubt or diffidence in our author, respecting the soundness of his own conclusions, or the correctness of his own explications. Diligently as he appears to have searched the divine records, and earnestly as he may be supposed to have prayed for divine guidance in the enquiry, it is not surprising that he should have stated the result of this enquiry, in very decisive terms; nor that he should have been urgent, in the inculcation of principles of which he was so deeply convinced. But it is observable, that his doctrinal discourses sometimes contain a combination of propositions, which subsequent controversies have represented as irreconcilable; and that either side of the questions, to which I have adverted in the course of this correspondence, as the subjects of our present religious differences, might be plausibly argued from his writings.* No author

* It will be recollected, that the observations in these pages, refer only to pulpit compositions; and chiefly to those which are of a hortatory character. In contro-

whom I know, has more clearly asserted the doctrines of free grace, and moral responsibility,—the certainty of God's promises, and the contingency of salvation,—justification by faith, and the requisition of obedience, not only as an evidence, but as a condition of acceptance,—the power of divine grace, and the free agency of man,—baptismal regeneration, and the general necessity of a subsequent renovation and conversion.

In so large and desultory a collection of sermons, and where almost every doctrinal statement is applied to some point of practical instruction, it would lead us too far, to

versial or expository *treatises* upon the doctrines of Scripture, less caution may perhaps be necessary; and candour requires a decided statement, of principles decidedly entertained. The Calvinism of Bishop Beveridge has been inferred from his exposition of the 39 Articles: yet even here, he seems to avoid any controversial discussion, and states the doctrine of predestination so cautiously and concisely, that few who conscientiously subscribe to the Article upon that subject, will very seriously object to this explanation of it,

cite particular examples ; and it would require an attentive collation and comparison, to trace the scriptural consistency of principles, successively urged in their insulated form, and balanced (if I may so speak) in their juxta-position. If you are inclined to make this comparison for yourself, the titles of the several discourses will direct you in the selection. *

While I would draw from this combination of principles, an authority for my own conviction, that the volume of Scripture

* In addition to the various republications of pious works, to which the zeal of the present times has given rise, it strikes me, that a compilation, formed upon the plan here suggested, from the writings of our eminent divines, and of Bishop Beveridge in particular, would be of infinite service. It is too much the practice of advocates on either side, to select only what is favourable to their own cause ; and thus these high authorities have sometimes been partially quoted, as inculcating opinions, which it seems to have been rather their object to oppose, or which at least they did not hold in the strong and unqualified sense imputed to them. Indeed, of all the difficulties in controversy, the difficulty of strictly impartial quotation, is perhaps the greatest.

furnishes evidence of them all, and assigns to each, its proper place in the beautiful and consistent scheme of Christianity, I would learn, where I found but one chain of these propositions exhibited, to consider the system rather as defective than corrupt;—and, instead of abruptly discarding the principles thus exaggerated or misapplied, I would endeavour to trace their compatibility with other doctrines of equal evidence and importance, and to show, that a full and implicit admission of the one class of truths, does not necessarily involve a rejection of the other. I acknowledge, that the truths of either class, assume a more exclusive character, under some forms of proposition: but I conceive that this very circumstance, sufficiently indicates the proportion in which they may be scripturally stated; and that a prominence of either part of the system, which obscures or destroys the other, is so far erroneous as it violates this proportion.

The sermons of Bishop Beveridge, are perhaps more calculated for general and

permanent usefulness, than any others of his day, as being more entirely popular. This character they partly derive, from his long service as an active parochial minister in London, and partly (I think) from the primitive piety of his mind, which led him to reject all extrinsic and adventitious ornament, and to adopt a plainness and simplicity of style, suited to the sublimity of a subject that requires no verbal decorations.

But the great beauty of these sermons, is a tender and pathetic earnestness,—a strong and affectionate appeal to the heart and conscience,—a close and personal application of the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel; which, however powerful in their nature to save or to reform, are actually effective, through this personal application alone:—such an exhibition of the great truths of revelation, as warms while it enlightens, and kindles the flame of devotion with the torch of knowledge.

It is a pretty thought, or quotation, in one of the Spectators, that the cherubim

are a class of angels who know most,—and the seraphim a class of angels who love most. However fanciful the distinction may be, it has often struck me that it might be applied, in the way of analogy, to the varieties of character in Christian writers; and the names of Barrow and of Beveridge, have more than once occurred as illustrative of the observation. I would not impute to either of these eminent men, a defect of the qualities which distinguished the other; but I think each was strikingly marked by a peculiar and characteristic feature, which has created a difference in their style of expressing the same principles, and illustrating the same subjects. While the acute and powerful intellect of Barrow, leads him to a habit of calm and close investigation, and enables him to exhibit his principles in every variety of light and position, and to enforce them with the whole weight of rational and scriptural proof,—the warm sensibility of Beveridge, enters with a deep and affectionate personality, into the delivery of his sacred message, and gives to his expostulations and instructions, a power and

authority almost apostolic. It is not, perhaps, every reader, who can reason and investigate with Barrow ; but all can feel with Beveridge ; and the conscience will often be awakened through the affections, when all the force of rational demonstration might have been applied in vain.

I have often wished that the fashion of private, or of religious biography, which in our time has descended to such unnecessary minuteness, had existed, when the memory of those venerable lights of our Church was still recent. The scanty notices of their private lives and labours, which remain to us, afford little knowledge of their personal and pastoral habits ; and even that little, we owe rather to their connexion with the secular history of their country, or the public history of their Church, than to their eminence, or peculiar devotedness, in the exercise of their spiritual calling.

To this remark Bishop Beveridge appears an exception. The memorials of him, indeed, are concise, and we are left in a great

measure to collect his character, from detached and incidental notices. But this character is exclusively pastoral. He owed nothing of his celebrity to any secular exertion; nor does it appear from history, that he took an active part in the ecclesiastical controversies of his time, though he seems to have expressed his judgment upon them, as a minister of the Church of England, with uncompromising plainness and sincerity. His appointment to the care of a large and populous parish, took place at a very early period of his life; and we are told, in a short biographical memoir prefixed to his sermons, that in this situation, “ he earnestly desired and endeavoured to
“ render his flock a pattern to others, for
“ true piety and holiness. He revived
“ the primitive practice among them, of administering the sacrament every Lord’s-
“ day; and was so diligent and faithful in
“ the discharge of every part of his office,
“ and had his labours crowned with such
“ remarkable success, that, as he himself
“ was deservedly styled the great reviver
“ and restorer of primitive piety, so his

“ parish, becoming by this means very exemplary for holiness, and a Christian conversation, was justly proposed as the best model and pattern for the rest of its neighbours to follow.”

We are also informed by Bishop Burnet, of the great exertions of Doctor Beveridge, in encouraging the revival of religious feeling, which took place in London towards the close of King James's reign; and it is remarkable, that the exertions of a minister so zealous and orthodox, were at that period a subject of jealousy, not merely to the popish or interested adherents of the court, but to some of better principles, who feared that the encouragement of such a spirit might lead to a renewal of past dissensions.

“ In King James's reign,” (says the Bishop,) “ the fear of popery was so strong, as well as just, that many in and about London, began to meet often together, both for devotion, and for their farther instruction. Things of that kind had been formerly practised only among the

“ Puritans and Dissenters ; but these were
 “ of the Church, and came to their minis-
 “ ters, to be assisted with forms of prayer
 “ and other directions. They were chiefly
 “ conducted by Doctor Beveridge and Doctor
 “ Horneck. Some disliked this, and were
 “ afraid it might be the original of new
 “ factions and parties ; but wiser men, and
 “ better, thought, that it was not fit nor
 “ decent to check a spirit of devotion at
 “ such a time. It might have given scandal,
 “ and it seemed a discouraging of piety ;
 “ and might be a means to drive well-mean-
 “ ing persons over to the Dissenters.”

I need not remind you, that these circum-
 stances led to the establishment of the noble
 institutions ; which are now considered as
 the bulwarks of our national church. The
 zeal of Bishop Beveridge in the promotion
 of these good works, it appears, did not ter-
 minate with his power of personal activity ;
 as he bequeathed the greater part of his
 fortune “ to the Societies for the propaga-
 tion of the Gospel, and promoting Christian
 knowledge, at home, as well as abroad.”

To appreciate justly the character of this truly evangelical prelate, we must recollect his long and active services in subordinate stations in the Church, and the late period to which, through his own choice, his advancement to its highest dignities was retarded. Scrupulous, it appears, of filling an office, from which a conscientious, though perhaps mistaken, principle had excluded its former possessor, he declined the offer of a bishopric, soon after the accession of King William; and continued for thirteen years to discharge his more private and laborious duties, with an assiduity, best evinced by the great and general success which attended his ministry. It was not till within three years of his death, and at a very advanced age, that he accepted the episcopal chair; and here, as the sphere of his pastoral duties extended, his care and diligence are said to have increased in proportion. The advancement of his Divine Master's glory, appears to have been the great object of his life, and he was permitted to witness, in a very eminent degree, the effects of his faithful services.

I have been led to these few remarks upon the personal character of Bishop Beveridge, not only because it is one which I contemplate with peculiar pleasure, but because I think it affords a very important instruction. In the study of his writings, if you follow the plan of comparison which I have suggested, you will find that he held such a system of doctrinal opinions, as, while it connected him with both parties in the Church, assimilated him in fact with neither: — or, I should rather say, that, careless of human schemes and systems, he pursued, with a single eye, and a candid, though fallible judgment, the light of Scriptural truth; carefully maintaining the fundamental doctrines of free grace, and moral responsibility, and leaving it to the more systematic expositor, to substitute his own notions of the Divine consistency, for the express testimony of Scripture. To this testimony the good Bishop bowed with implicit submission: and in the wide range of his doctrinal and practical illustrations, he opens his principles with a primitive simplicity; indifferent, it appears, as to the

opinion which men might form of a doctrine, that he considered as not his own, but His who had sent him:

If you are inclined to except from this praise, the sermons on Church union and Church authority, I would venture to observe, that they stand (in one sense at least,) on a different ground, and should be judged by a different standard. The question of Church government, is confessedly, in some degree, a question of tradition; and in proportion as it is so, it must be considered as a point of opinion, rather than as an article of faith. In this view, our apprehension of the merits of the question, must follow the weight of evidence upon it, and our estimate of the judgment and impartiality with which that evidence is investigated; and it is natural that we should also be influenced, by those arguments of a more remote and collateral bearing, which lead us to infer the value of a system, from the perception of its beneficial effects, or from the observation of evils which have followed upon its subversion.

Under the influence of this double experience, as well as upon the clearest principles of scriptural and traditional proof, Bishop Beveridge and some of his venerable brethren, defended the established government in the Church: and under this same influence, while the records of history remain to us, may it be strenuously and effectually defended, even by those who do not consider it as a matter of indispensable and perpetual obligation! —

But, however you may be inclined to withhold your assent from some of the Bishop's strong positions on this subject, or even to hesitate upon those doctrinal views, which seem to militate against your favourite principles, you will not, I am persuaded, deny him the character of a truly primitive and evangelical minister: and you will agree with me in lamenting the prejudice, which seems of late years, to have transferred this title, from pious individuals in the Church, to a class; and, applying it, not so much to the description of character, as to the designation of opinion, appears to have attached it

chiefly, if not exclusively, to those of our clergy who hold the Calvinistic view of predestination, or preach the doctrine of justification by faith, under a particular form of proposition. May we not ask, (without any disparagement to the great proportion of this class, whom we acknowledge to be truly and eminently evangelical,) does not such an epithet, thus applied as a mark of doctrinal distinction, appear to divide the Church against herself? — and is it not evident, and deeply to be lamented, that while this primitive and honourable title, whether affixed as a reproach, or assumed as an appellation, describes one party of her ministers, and another is designated by the appellation of orthodox, a dangerous and invidious distinction is established in the public opinion, between the minister of the Church, and the minister of the Gospel? This is, indeed, one of those cases, in which “ words, from a change of use, seem to lose” (as Barrow somewhere remarks,) “ their original signification;” and terms which ought to be considered as nearly synonymous, are placed in an injurious opposition

to each other. If the doctrine of the English Church be evangelical, — if her discipline be evangelical, — if this primitive title was the boast of her early martyrs, — it still applies, in my apprehension, generally to *all* her faithful ministers : and it belongs emphatically to those, who have distinguished themselves in the defence of her doctrines, the support of her discipline, or the enforcement of her pure and beautiful morality. To my apprehension, it describes the minister of Christ, bearing upon his lips the testimony of his Divine Master, and exhibiting in his conduct, the influence of the law which he proclaims : — the willing messenger of the glad tidings of salvation, — the faithful guide through the narrow way that leads to everlasting life ; — rightly dividing the word of truth, and not hesitating to declare the whole counsel of God, as well in the stupendous mystery of gratuitous redemption, as in the conditions on which he has been pleased to suspend our final hope of acceptance. This, my friend, I conceive to be evangelical truth ; and this I hold to be the evangelical character ; and

I trust that you have anticipated me, in applying the epithet to this truly excellent prelate, and in praying that our Church may long be blessed with guardians of a similar spirit.

But it is time to bring this digression to a close, and return to our more general enquiry. I will however release you for the present, and reserve the prosecution of it for my next letter.

Yours, most affectionately.

LETTER XXXIII.

GENERAL RETROSPECT.—BOYLE'S LECTURES.

POLEMICAL DIVINITY IN THE REIGNS OF QUEEN ANNE AND GEORGE THE FIRST.—INFIDELITY.—HOBBS.—DANGERS AND ARTIFICE OF HIS SYSTEM.—LINE OF OPPOSITION ADOPTED BY THE ADVOCATES OF REVELATION.—INFLUENCE OF THIS, UPON THE NATIONAL THEOLOGY.—PROGRESS OF INFIDELITY.—ZEAL OF CHRISTIANS AWAKENED TO ARREST IT.—BOYLE'S LECTURE.—ITS OBJECT LIMITED TO THE GENERAL DEFENCE OF REVELATION.—CONSEQUENCE OF THIS.—SUBJECTS OF SOME OF THESE LECTURES.—CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM.—EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.—OBJECTION DRAWN FROM THE IMPERFECT PROMULGATION OF THE GOSPEL.—REPLY TO THIS OBJECTION, FROM BISHOP BRADFORD.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN touching upon the period of our polemical history, at which we are now arrived in our retrospect, (including the reigns of Queen Anne and George the First,) I must first notice the active and systematic hostility, displayed in the successive attacks upon revelation; and especially the artifice of fighting Christianity, as it were, with her own weapons, and urging some of the

peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, to disprove its evidence, and subvert its authority.

In the writings of Hobbes, to which I have already alluded, and which, though they did not expressly attack revelation, seem to have done as much to undermine its influence, as any other productions of the infidel school, the natural distinctions of good and evil were annihilated: and while the Divine Law was formally admitted as the rule of human conduct, the evidence of this law, was ridiculed or disputed; its sanctions were neutralized by the disbelief of a future life, and its moral influence upon the will, was destroyed by the denial of human liberty.

We are informed by Bishop Burnet, that the mischievous tendency of the writings of Hobbes, was not perceived on their first publication, from the partial resemblance which his system bore to the Calvinistic scheme. His artifice, of identifying the doctrine of necessity with that of predesti-

nation, and, admitting, or exaggerating, the depravity of human nature, was calculated to deceive, or to disarm, the Christian reader; and the line of argument to which his opponents were necessarily led in refutation, in the assertion of natural law, free agency, and the office and power of conscience, combined the general vindication of religion with a free examination of the Calvinistic doctrines, and an exhibition of the evil consequences of their abuse, whether under the influence of infidelity or enthusiasm. Hence it followed, that many of the opponents of Hobbes maintained a double controversy; and appear alternately to have had in view, the principles of the infidel and the fanatic; or rather the application of principles apparently similar, to the defence of enthusiasm or impiety. From this circumstance, it appears, has arisen the practice of enlarging the foundations of natural religion; and referring to certain abstract principles of morals, as inherent in the human mind, and necessarily and obviously resulting from the nature and re-

lations of things. Admitting, however, the existence of these principles, and even their agreeableness to natural reason, there is still a distinction to be made, between the abstract fitness of an action, and the obligation of an agent to perform it: and this obligation can never be proved, but upon the admission of some authority competent to impose it. The law of nature, therefore, cannot strictly be alleged as binding upon rational and moral agents, unless there be, on the part of the legislator and the subject, the mutual sanctions of power and responsibility. So that, after all, the whole scheme of human duty, must rest upon the belief of a Creator and a Providence, and of a preference in the Divine Mind for certain modes of conduct, — founded, indeed, upon their abstract fitness, and consistency with the order and relations of things established by his infinite wisdom and goodness, but constituting in itself, the only tie that binds man to obedience as a moral agent. God approves the action, because it is right; man is bound to the action, because God approves it. Under any other view, the most

enlightened observance of the law of nature, might be the result of wisdom or prudence, but could not be the exercise of virtue or religion.

If this distinction is not always exhibited as prominently as it ought, it seems to have been rather because it was overlooked than disputed; or perhaps it is by the omission, or rather the transposition, of one link in the moral chain, that the apparent obscurity is occasioned. The essential difference in the nature of things, is represented as constituting, not only the ground of the law, but the law itself; and the system of creation is made to stand, as it were, between man and his Creator. I would not vindicate this mode of defending religion, but merely assign the probable cause of its adoption; and observe, that as the scheme of Hobbes and his school, was calculated to overthrow all moral distinctions, the establishment of these distinctions upon the principles of reason, (for revelation would have been no medium of proof, to those who denied its authority,)

seems to have been the great object of their opponents. The versatile genius of infidelity, however, soon turned these arguments to its own advantage; and pleaded, that if the evidence of natural law and religion was so obviously agreeable to reason, there was little need of a revelation to confirm it. To this objection, we owe some admirable Treatises and Sermons, upon the necessity of revelation in general; and to the more direct attacks which followed in the course of the infidel combination, we are indebted, for those excellent defences of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, which have triumphantly established our religion, upon the very evidence adduced to subvert it.

The succession of libertine and deistical publications which rapidly followed each other, at this period, awakened the zeal of some eminent friends of religion; and, in addition to the efforts of individuals, societies were formed, and public lectures were instituted, for the propagation and defence of Christianity. Of these, I shall only no-

tice the lecture founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle ; whom I have already mentioned, as one of those distinguished laymen*, to whose characters the friends of

* The writer ventures here to transcribe a part of the character of this eminent man, as given by his friend and biographer, Bishop Burnet. Though it is already very generally known, through the medium of cheap and recent editions ; it contains instruction so important, and example so excellent, that it cannot be too extensively circulated.

“ Soon after the Restoration, in the year 1660, the
“ great minister of that time pressed him, both by himself
“ and another, to enter into orders. He did it not
“ merely out of respect to him and his family, but out
“ of his regard for the Church ; that he thought would
“ receive a great strengthening, as well as a powerful
“ example, from one, who, if he once entered into holy
“ orders, would be quickly at the top. This, he told
“ me, made some impression on him. His mind was,
“ even then, (at three and thirty,) so entirely disengaged
“ from all the projects and concerns of this world, that
“ as the prospect of dignity in the Church could not
“ move him much, so the probability of his doing good
“ in it was much the stronger motive. Two things de-
“ termined him against it ; one was, that his having no
“ other interests, with relation to religion, besides those
“ of saving his own soul, gave him, as he thought,
“ a more unsuspected authority, in writing or acting on
“ that side. He knew, the profane crew fortified them-

religion may appeal for proof of her rational influence. This excellent Christian and

“ selves against all that was said by men of our profes-
 “ sion, with this, that it was their trade, and that they
 “ were paid for it; he hoped, therefore, that he might
 “ have the more influence, the less he shared in the
 “ patrimony of the Church. But his main reason was,
 “ that he had so high a sense of the obligations of the
 “ pastoral care, and of such as watch over those souls,
 “ which Christ purchased with his own blood, and for
 “ which they must give an account at the last great day,
 “ that he *durst not* undertake it; especially not having
 “ felt within himself an inward motion to it by the Holy
 “ Ghost; and the first question, put to those who come
 “ to be initiated into the service of the Church, relating
 “ to that motion, he, who had not felt it, thought he
 “ durst not make the step, lest otherwise he should
 “ have lied to the Holy Ghost, so solemnly and se-
 “ riously did he judge of sacred matters.”

“ He was constant to the Church, and went to no
 “ separate assemblies, how charitably soever he might
 “ think of their persons, and how plentifully soever he
 “ might have relieved their necessities. He loved no
 “ narrow thoughts, nor low or superstitious opinions in
 “ religion; and therefore, as he did not shut himself up
 “ within a party, so neither did he shut any party out
 “ from him. He had brought his mind to such a free-
 “ dom, that he was not apt to be imposed on; and his
 “ modesty was such, that he did not dictate to others;
 “ but proposed his own sense with a due and decent
 “ distrust; and was ever very ready to hearken to what

philosopher, not only defended our holy Faith by his writings, and adorned it by his life, but bequeathed, at his death, a liberal benefaction, for its vindication against the attacks of infidelity, in the institution of an annual (or triennial) course of lectures, the particular object of which is thus specified in his will : — “ for proving the Christian
 “ religion against notorious infidels ; viz.
 “ atheists, theists, pagans, Jews, and Maho-
 “ metans ; *not descending lower, to any con-*

“ was suggested to him by others. When he differed
 “ from any, he expressed himself in so humble and ob-
 “ liging a way, that he never treated things or persons
 “ with neglect ; and I never heard that he offended any
 “ one person in his whole life, by any part of his de-
 “ portment. For if at any time he saw cause to speak
 “ roundly to any, it was never in a passion, nor with
 “ any reproachful or indecent expressions. And as he
 “ was careful to give those who conversed with him, no
 “ cause or colour for displeasure, so he was yet more
 “ careful of those who were absent, never to speak ill of
 “ any ; in which he was the exactest man I ever knew.
 “ If the discourse turned to be hard on any, he was
 “ presently silent ; and if the subject was too long dwelt
 “ on, he would at last interpose, and between reproof
 “ and raillery, divert it.”

“ controversies that are among Christians themselves.”

In the publication of the sermons preached at these lectures, from the period of their institution, to the year 1739, we have a large and valuable body of divinity; necessarily limited, however, to the defence of the general evidences of religion, and precluded from the discussion of peculiar doctrines, or questions in debate between Christians of different persuasions. It is important to keep this circumstance in view, as one which has not only restricted the subject of these lectures, but has also contributed, perhaps, to influence the general style and habits of thinking, of the divines successively employed in their composition. Amongst these, we observe the names of many eminent ornaments of our Church and country; and if we are contented to look for no more than may be reasonably expected in such discourses, we shall find in this collection, a full and triumphant accomplishment of the object to which they were directed. It is obvious, however, that we

cannot here expect any prominent enforcement, of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; and if we connect the subjects of these lectures, with the literary and polemical history of the times, as well as with the regulations of the founder, we shall at once perceive the necessity of such a line of defence, and be enabled to account for the variety of posts, which the writers in this great controversy have successively maintained.

Of the infidel publications opposed in these lectures, many are happily consigned to oblivion, or at least known to the Christian reader, only through the medium of such refutations. And this, by the way, (as I have observed elsewhere,) is one unfortunate effect of pulpit-controversy. While the preacher is labouring for the conviction of the sceptic, he may be undermining the faith of the humble disciple; suggesting doubts which would never have occurred, and obviating difficulties, which would never have embarrassed him. This inconvenience, however, was unavoidable, at the

period to which our observations refer; when the popular taste revolted from serious studies, and the pulpit was almost the only channel, through which the defences of revelation could be effectually and extensively circulated; and from whence, the infidel who came to Church for fashion or decency, (for many of the infidels of that day, professed a respect for religion, and even prefaced their attacks with such professions,) could be made to hear the refutation of his pernicious doctrines.

The shortest way to understand the principle, upon which I think that many omissions in these lectures may be at once accounted for and excused, would be to examine the titles prefixed to them; which at once indicate the subject to be discussed, and suggest to the polemical reader, the name and system of the objector whom the preacher designs to refute.

The more general sermons in confutation of atheism, are chiefly directed against the principles of Hobbes and Spinoza, (a conti-

mental atheist,) sometimes by name, and oftener by implication or allusion. Against these principles, or rather against the objectors who maintained them, any arguments drawn from the authority or evidence of revelation, would have been excepted to, as an assumption of one of the points in dispute ; and it was consequently necessary, to argue upon principles and evidences admitted, or appealed to, by the objectors themselves. The adoption of the very revelation in question, as the instrument of the demonstration, would not have been allowed by these objectors, and would have left them still in possession, of the general ground of rational and philosophical argument, from whence the present management of the controversy has effectually dislodged them.

In some of these lectures, the divine origin of Christianity is proved, by the evidence of prophecy, miracles, and extraordinary success ; and notwithstanding the captious objections of infidelity to this evidence, its strength has increased, and is progressively

increasing, with every attempt to overthrow it. The appeal to prophecy by the advocates of Christianity, has been objected to by infidel writers, as requiring, in the first instance, a confidence in the prediction, and an admission of the record in which it is contained. "The prophecies," (says Mr. Gibbon, whom I may quote as an active member of this school, though much later than the period we are reviewing,) "are now one of the strongest arguments in favour of Christianity, because it is one of the fundamental parts of the Christian faith, to acknowledge the authority of the Jewish Scriptures." But why, my friend, is it so? — Because the Jewish Scriptures contain those very predictions, — which announced the miraculous birth and actions of our Saviour, hundreds, nay thousands of years, before the event took place, and still continue interwoven in the body of the Old Testament, though in the hands of the Jews, the most bitter and inveterate enemies of Christianity; who certainly, if the authority of these predictions had not been too well established

by their age and publicity, would have expunged passages which so pointedly foretell their wicked and fatal obduracy, and so particularly describe the innocent Person, who was to fall a sacrifice to their obstinate incredulity.

But prophecy cannot strictly be said to form a distinct branch of the evidence of Christianity. — It is, in itself, a miraculous evidence, and a corroborative proof of those early miracles which are become the subject of historical testimony. It is, if I may be allowed the expression, a standing and perpetual, indeed a progressive miracle; — a miracle, to which no deception can be imputed, as the strength of its proof, depends on the severity with which it is canvassed; — a miracle, submitted, not to the hasty, and possibly erroneous decision, extorted from ignorance by surprise, (a favourite charge against the miracles of the Gospel,) — but to the cool and severe examination of the critic in his closet, to be sifted in all its parts, to be judged by the 'collation of historical evidence, with present observation and ex-

perience, and, by the proofs which that examination produces, of authority or imposition, to stand or fall.

The wide and rapid progress of Christianity in the early ages, without the aid of human power or influence, indeed in direct opposition to both, has been urged as another proof of its divine authority; and is well enforced in some of these lectures. It appears to me, that a reference to the *contrast* which later times exhibit, will afford a confirmation of this argument; for how, but upon the supposition of a miraculous power, accompanying the testimony of the first Christians to their faith, can we account for the stupendous effect produced by their preaching? Whatever secondary causes might have originally contributed to this success, would still equally operate in similar cases; yet, so far from observing similar results, we find not, in the history of later missions, with all the aid of human means which the first preachers wanted, as many converts to Christianity in half a

century, as a single apostolical sermon produced.

But infidelity, with singular perverseness, while it would account, from natural causes, for the early and extensive diffusion of the Gospel, which is pleaded by its advocates as a proof of miraculous evidence, objects to its limited and partial promulgation, as inconsistent with the character of a divine and universal religion. Upon this subject, I am tempted to quote a few passages from a sermon of Bishop Bradford, appended to his lectures, in this collection.

“ Such was the fidelity and industry of
“ the apostles, and their immediate succes-
“ sors, and so conformable were their lives
“ to the excellent doctrine which they
“ preached, that Christianity had incredi-
“ ble success in those early times ; inso-
“ much, that in about three hundred years,
“ it prevailed against all the false religions,
“ which had been so long received, and
“ became the established religion of the
“ Roman empire.

“ This was the course which Providence
“ took, for the dispersion of the knowledge
“ of our Saviour and his religion through
“ the world ; which, as it was the most na-
“ tural and most reasonable means to that
“ end, so, I can hardly doubt, that if the
“ Christians of the ages following, had con-
“ tinued to recommend their profession, by
“ the exemplariness of their lives, and had
“ retained that zeal which their predeces-
“ sors showed, for propagating it in the
“ world, it had long before this, been the
“ established religion of mankind. So that
“ if the Gospel be not published to the
“ world universally, it proceeds not from
“ any defect in the provision which God
“ hath made for that purpose, but from the
“ fault of those to whom God hath com-
“ mitted so great a trust. Had Christian
“ princes been as zealous to promote the
“ religion of our Lord, (I mean not by
“ violence, but by means suitable to the
“ nature of this religion,) as to extend their
“ empire, — had Christian subjects been as
“ eager to advance the knowledge of our
“ Maker and Redeemer, in foreign parts,

“ as they have been to settle trade and
“ commerce there, — if all of us, who call
“ ourselves Christians, had shown forth, in
“ Christian tempers and practices, the vir-
“ tues of Him that hath called us, and the
“ excellency of the religion he hath taught
“ us, — there would, probably, have been
“ no occasion for enquiring, as we now do,
“ why the Gospel of our Lord is confined
“ within such narrow bounds.”

“ If the love of God towards mankind, be
“ so extensive, it becomes us then, instead
“ of cavilling at the Divine Providence, on
“ account of the Gospel not being published
“ to all the world, to do our part towards
“ the propagation of it.”

“ The princes and great men of the
“ earth, may do very much to this purpose,
“ as I have already observed. Others also,
“ especially those bodies and societies
“ of men which have converse with the
“ Gentile world, might contrive methods
“ for propagating their religion, together
“ with their trade; and all of us might

“ contribute to this generous design, by
 “ our earnest prayers to God for the en-
 “ larging of his Son’s kingdom, and that it
 “ would please him to excite the spirits of
 “ those who have power and interest, to
 “ advance this noble work.” — “ This, the
 “ pious founder of these lectures had a
 “ great sense of, when, by a clause in his
 “ will, he obliged those who should preach
 “ them, ‘ to be aiding and assisting to all
 “ companies, and encouraging them in any
 “ undertaking, for propagating the Chris-
 “ tian religion in foreign parts.’ ”

But to return from this digression: —
 The prominent doctrines of infidelity, at the
 period under our review, were, materialism
 and necessity.* In these, the whole school

* Bishop Butler, in his admirable “ Analogy,” has
 driven the infidel even from this ground; and shown,
 that whatever difficulties or absurdities the doctrine of
 necessity may contain, it cannot fairly be employed to
 destroy the proof, or invalidate the obligations, of reli-
 gion.

“ The proof from final causes, of an intelligent Author
 “ of nature, is not affected by the opinion of necessity;

(except, perhaps, Lord Shaftesbury,) seem to have agreed ; and consequently, against

“ supposing necessity a thing possible in itself, and re-
 “ concileable with the constitution of things. And it is
 “ a matter of *fact*, independent on this, or any other
 “ speculation, that he governs the world by the method
 “ of rewards and punishments ; and also that he hath
 “ given us a moral faculty, by which we distinguish be-
 “ tween actions, and approve some, as virtuous and of
 “ good desert, and disapprove others, as vicious and of
 “ ill desert. Now this moral discernment implies, in
 “ the notion of it, a rule of action, and a rule of a very
 “ peculiar kind ; for it carries in it authority, and a right
 “ of direction ; authority, in such a sense, as that we
 “ cannot depart from it, without being self-condemned.
 “ And, that the dictates of this moral faculty, which are
 “ by nature a rule to us, are moreover the laws of God,
 “ laws in a sense including sanctions, may be thus
 “ proved. Consciousness of a rule or guide of action,
 “ in creatures who are capable of considering it as given
 “ them by their Maker, not only raises, immediately, a
 “ sense of duty, but also a sense of security in following
 “ it, and of danger in deviating from it. A direction
 “ of the Author of nature, given to creatures capable of
 “ looking upon it as such, is plainly a command from
 “ him ; and a command from him, necessarily includes
 “ in it, at least, an implicit promise in case of obedience,
 “ or threatening in case of disobedience. But then the
 “ sense or perception of good and ill desert, which is
 “ contained in the moral discernment, renders the sanc-
 “ tion explicit, and makes it appear, as one may say,

these, the advocates of revelation were led chiefly to direct their opposition. Hence

“ expressed. For since his method of government is
 “ to reward and punish actions, his having annexed to
 “ some actions, an inseparable sense of good desert, and
 “ and to others, of ill, this surely amounts to declaring
 “ upon whom his punishments shall be inflicted, and
 “ his rewards bestowed. For he must have given us
 “ this discernment and sense of things, as a presenti-
 “ ment of what is to be hereafter, that is, by way of
 “ information beforehand, what we are finally to expect
 “ in his world. There is then the most evident ground
 “ to think, that the government of God, upon the
 “ whole, will be found to correspond to the nature
 “ which he has given us; and that, in the upshot and
 “ issue of things, happiness and misery shall, in fact
 “ and event, be made to follow virtue and vice respec-
 “ tively; as he has already, in so peculiar a manner,
 “ associated the ideas of them in our minds. And from
 “ hence might easily be deduced the obligations of re-
 “ ligious worship, were it only to be considered as a
 “ means of preserving in our minds, a sense of this
 “ moral government of God, and securing our obe-
 “ dience to it; which yet is an extremely imperfect view
 “ of that most important duty.”

“ Now, I say, no objection from necessity can lie
 “ against this general proof of religion:—none, against
 “ the proposition reasoned upon, that we have such a
 “ moral faculty and discernment; because this is a mat-
 “ ter of fact, a thing of experience, that human kind is
 “ thus constituted; — none, against the conclusion, be-

would naturally arise, (as I have before observed,) an earnestness in the vindication of human liberty, which might sometimes lead these writers, imperceptibly to themselves, to trench upon the Scripture limitations of this doctrine; and hence would also be derived the abstruse and metaphysical character, which has been objected to the divinity in question. On either of these points, I shall remark no farther; but limit

“ cause it is immediate and wholly from this fact. For
 “ the conclusion, that God will finally reward the
 “ righteous, and punish the wicked, is *not here* drawn,
 “ from its *appearing to us fit that he should*, but from
 “ its appearing that he has told us he will. And this he
 “ hath certainly told us, in the promise and threatening,
 “ which, it hath been observed, the notion of a com-
 “ mand implies, and the sense of good and ill desert,
 “ which he has given us, more distinctly expresses.
 “ And this reasoning from *fact*, is confirmed, and in
 “ some degree even verified, by other facts; by the na-
 “ tural tendencies of virtue and vice, — and by this, that
 “ God, in the natural course of his providence, punishes
 “ vicious actions, as mischievous to society, and also
 “ vicious actions, as such, in the strictest sense. So that
 “ the general proof of religion is unanswerably real,
 “ even upon the wild supposition we are arguing upon.”

Butler's Analogy, p. 167.

myself to a few observations, on two or three of the preachers of these lectures, whose names are still familiar to the theological reader, and whose eminence in this sort of philosophical divinity, obtained for them, at a later period, a number of imitators and admirers.

I shall, however, reserve these observations, for my next letter ; and trespass no longer, at present, upon your patience, than while I subscribe myself,

Yours, very faithfully.

LETTER XXXIV.

DOCTOR SAMUEL CLARKE.

DOCTOR SAMUEL CLARKE. -- HIS SERMONS AT BOYLE'S LECTURE. -- OBJECTIONS MADE TO THE LINE OF ARGUMENT PURSUED IN THEM. -- HIS APOLOGY. -- REMARKS ON THIS METHOD OF DEFENDING RELIGION. -- DOCTOR CLARKE'S GENERAL AND PRACTICAL SERMONS. -- MODIFIED VIEW OF HUMAN CORRUPTION. -- PROBABLE REASON OF THIS. -- DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT. -- JUSTIFICATION. -- INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. -- CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN I look back upon the length of a correspondence, which I intended to have limited to a few sheets, I am almost afraid to renew my promise of conciseness; yet, without some such encouragement, I can hardly expect that you will encounter any more "giants," or be inclined to proceed farther in an enquiry, which seems to approach so slowly to its end.

I proposed, in my last, to offer a few remarks upon two or three of the preachers of Boyle's lectures, whose eminence in what we may call *philosophical* divinity, had contributed to form the taste, and to influence the practice, of their successors in the Church.

The first place in this class, is due to the celebrated Doctor Samuel Clarke; who, as a philosopher, a practical preacher, and an expositor, held, perhaps, the first place in the public estimation, of all the writers of his time; and whom it seems now the fashion to load with a censure as indiscriminate, as the praise of his contemporaries was excessive.*

* The reader will perhaps recollect, here, the controversy respecting Doctor Clarke's "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity," and hesitate, on that account, to subscribe to any favourable estimate of his general character as a divine. But, agreeing (as the writer does fully) in the objections made to his statement of this doctrine, it does not follow that we should withhold from him that credit, upon other points, to which his scriptural fidelity and sound judgment may entitle him. I have

His celebrated sermons, preached at these lectures, and afterwards connected into the form of treatises, on “The Being and Attributes of God,” and “The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,” come

said already, (and I repeat it,) that our confidence in the efficacy of our blessed Saviour’s death, as a satisfaction for the sins of mankind, must rest upon our belief of his essential divinity; and this Doctor Clarke himself has strongly enforced, in the sermons that treat of the doctrine of the atonement. In fact, his deviation from the doctrine of the Church was much less than is commonly supposed, by those who take his character upon trust, either from his admirers or his enemies. ‘The praise of Hoadly, whose orthodoxy on this point is more justly questioned, has done Doctor Clarke no service: and the Arian and Socinian dissenters, are too ready at all times to claim the alliance of eminent Churchmen, and to wrest insulated or unguarded positions, to the support of principles which the author’s never maintained, to be entitled to implicit credit on this subject. It is much to be lamented, that any aberration from the doctrine of the Church, should have lessened the usefulness, and lowered the theological character, of this zealous and laborious minister. Yet, as this aberration appears (if we except a very few of his sermons) but in one controversial work, it would be unjust to him, and unfair to the reader, to withhold from his writings the general praise to which they are entitled.

under our notice, only in connection with the charge, of reasoning *à priori*, and of subordinating the divinity of the Bible, to the principles, and the judgment, of human science, — which has been brought against this class of divines, and against Doctor Clarke in particular, and has been recently revived * by a very powerful preacher of authoritative and evangelical divinity.† But if we hear Doctor Clarke,

* Doctor Chalmers. — Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation, p. 248, 249.

† The writer is here led, by the course of the subject, to the unavoidable introduction of a reference to a living preacher, whose vigorous and original genius has elicited a new, but irresistible demonstration, of the awful and humbling doctrine, which lies at the foundation of the Christian scheme; viz. the corruption of human nature. In placing this corruption in a natural averseness to religion, he has stamped it with one striking and universal feature, to which every human being must, at one period or other, acknowledge a resemblance; and has forced from their refuge, of pride and self-complacency, all who would triumph in the Pharisaic boast, “that *they* are not as other men are.” If his character may be comprised in a few words, he is at once the most *comprehensive*, and the most *personal*, of modern preachers. In his strong and faithful delineations of the species,

himself, upon the subject, in reference to the *first* of these treatises, we shall find that this line of argument, was rather forced upon him by his opponents, than adopted by his own choice. It was not so much for the instruction of the Christian convert, as for the confutation of the infidel, and the conviction of the sceptic, that these discourses were composed; and they are *prefaced* with an *apology* for the line of argument pursued in them, which is more fully repeated by the author, on another occasion.

“ There being already published, many
 “ and good books, to prove the Being and
 “ Attributes of God, I have chosen (says
 “ he) to contract what was requisite for
 “ me to say, into as narrow a compass, and
 “ to express what I had to offer, in as few
 “ words, as I could, with perspicuity. *For*
 “ *which reason*, I have also confined my-

every individual recognizes his own picture; and can only shut out the perception of the resemblance, by closing the volume, or closing his eyes — an awful expedient, if the volume speaks truth; and the testimony of conscience confirms it.

“ self to one only method, or continued
 “ thread of arguing ; which I have endea-
 “ voured should be as near to mathematical,
 “ as the nature of such a discourse would
 “ allow ; omitting some other arguments,
 “ which I could not discern to be so evi-
 “ dently conclusive ; *because it seems not to*
 “ *be at any time for the real advantage of*
 “ *truth, to urge arguments in its behalf,*
 “ *founded only on such hypotheses, as the ad-*
 “ *versaries apprehend they cannot be com-*
 “ *pelled to grant.*”*

In another place, he says, “ the argument
 “ *à posteriori*, is indeed by far the most
 “ generally useful argument, and most easy
 “ to be understood ; and is, in some de-
 “ gree, suited to all capacities ; and there-
 “ fore ought always to be insisted on. But,
 “ forasmuch as atheistical writers have
 “ sometimes opposed the being and attri-
 “ butes of God, by such metaphysical rea-
 “ sonings, as can *no otherwise be obviated*

* Preface to the Demonstration, &c.

“ than by arguing *à priori*, therefore this
“ manner of arguing also, is useful and ne-
“ cessary, in its proper place.”

I cite this, as Clarke's apology, not as my own opinion; for, to my mind, Whiston's answer to a similar defence, (a reference to the first flower he saw in his walk,) affords a better confutation of infidelity, than all the subtilties of metaphysics.

I need not remind you, of the noble proofs of the being and attributes of God, which have been drawn from the works of creation, or what is called above, the argument *à posteriori*. This method of demonstration has been ably and successfully employed, by some of the preachers of these lectures, and by other eminent divines of our country; whose labours possess an additional value, in the antidote which they furnish against the infidelity of the French naturalists and mathematicians. Yet the distinguished writer to whom I have alluded, involves this latter argument, in his objection to the former, and seems to consider the

application of it in divinity, as superseding the authoritative testimony of Scripture. It is not, however, to the peculiar doctrines of revelation, or even to its evidences, that this argument is, or can be, applied; but to the proof of that great truth, which is the foundation of all religion, and from the firm establishment of which, revelation must derive its authority. “He that cometh to God, must believe that he is.” Scripture, to speak strictly, does not *prove* the existence of God, but *supposes* it; — a fact which we may infer from the practice of St. Paul himself; who, while he employs Scripture, as a medium of proof with the Jews, who admitted its authority, — yet, with a divine and miraculous power in his hands, for the irresistible conviction of the Gentile infidel, urges this very argument *à posteriori*, as leaving his infidelity without excuse; and deems it not inexpedient, on some occasions, to appeal to reason and analogy, in support of the doctrines of revelation.*

* Acts xiv. 17.—Romans . 20.

We may farther observe, that this argument *à posteriori*, is the very same inductive process, which the writer in question applies so ably to the proof of Christianity. Establishing by evidence, its miraculous introduction, he thence infers its divine original. Proving the *deviation* from the ordinary operations of nature, for the accomplishment of a moral object, he thence demonstrates the interference of the Author of nature, and his absolute sovereignty over the system, which he has been pleased generally to regulate by the intervention of second causes. In like manner, the pious naturalist and philosopher, by a survey of this wonderful system, and a view of the exquisite adaptation of all its parts, to some assignable purposes, (at least, so far as the weak reason of man can discern them,—for the perfection of such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for him,) — endeavours to trace the footsteps of the Deity, in the order and harmony, the beauty and usefulness, of his works ; and, through the study of the wonders of nature, to lead to the adoration of nature's God.

It is not without much diffidence and hesitation, that I have introduced any position of this admirable writer, as a subject of animadversion ; but, as his authority in the censure alluded to, has contributed to extend the prejudice against reasoning in divinity, much farther than he probably intended, the notice of it could not fairly be omitted.

I dare not, however, vindicate from this censure, the second of the treatises above-mentioned, (the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion ;) in which, it must be confessed, that the author has been led, by his anxiety to refute his opponents upon their own ground, into some very questionable positions upon the internal evidences of revelation.

In forming an estimate of Doctor Clarke's more general and practical sermons, it is necessary to recollect the double controversy to which I have adverted above. The pernicious consequences of the doctrine of necessity, as held and inculcated by the

atheistical objector, appearing to follow equally the doctrine of absolute predestination, — and each of these doctrines being connected with that of the utter worthlessness and depravity of man, described in the system of the former, as a state of uncontrolled selfishness, and natural warfare of every man with his fellow, and in the latter, as a total enslavement of the human will to the dominion of evil, and attaching a sentence of future and eternal condemnation, apparently to an original corruption, independent of choice, and incapable (without a miracle,) of removal, — these consequences, I say, of reckless immorality to the infidel, of presumption to the enthusiast, and of desperation to the timid and humble believer, appear to have been constantly held in view at this period; and to have led, as I have already observed, to a prominent enforcement of the doctrine of free will, as the only ground of moral responsibility. In arguing this point with the philosophical necessarian, the *fact* of man's free agency has been abundantly proved: — in maintaining it against the high predestinarian system,

there seems to have existed a groundless fear, of admitting the full extent of human corruption, lest it should be pleaded as an apology for the breach of the divine laws, and a natural propensity to sin identified with a necessity of sinning. From this difficulty, a recurrence to the scheme of the Gospel, relieves us. There, we learn to depend upon that supernatural aid which helpeth our infirmities, and are taught at the same time, the necessity of our own voluntary co-operation, to bring to good effect, those good desires which the Divine Grace has infused: and the certainty that this grace, freely offered to us through Christ, is absolutely necessary to all men, — that by it, and with it, we may be saved if we will, though without it, we shall infallibly be lost, — removes all objections to the mercy of God, drawn from the supposed severity of his requisitions from feeble and fallen creatures.

Upon this great truth, it cannot be denied, that an aberration from the bold and

Scriptural statements of Hooker, and Barrow, and Tillotson, had already begun ; and though Doctor Clarke often refers to the doctrine, either incidentally or expressly, as an acknowledged principle of Scripture, it must be confessed that his vindications of reason and natural liberty, appear sometimes to trench upon the Scriptural limitations ; or at least that he does not sufficiently mark (what, from many hints contained in his writings, I cannot doubt that he believed,) the derivation of this moral freedom, from our restoration to the grace of God through Christ.

Upon the doctrine of the atonement, however, the statement of Doctor Clarke is full and explicit *, and though he does not

* The following extracts are selected, as short and full, upon this fundamental doctrine : but many others equally strong, might be produced. Doctor Johnson's testimony to the merit of these sermons upon this important point, is well known.

“ From the doctrines herein explained, we may learn
“ the true nature of Christ's satisfaction : namely, that
“ his death was truly and properly, in the strictest

treat the doctrine of justification so expressly, nor exhibit it so frequently, as

“ meaning of the word, an expiatory sacrifice. For, if
 “ sinners, by having diminished the honour, and de-
 “ spised the authority of God’s laws, were become
 “ liable to the justice and vengeance of God, — if the
 “ Son of God in our nature, by vindicating the honour of
 “ God’s laws, hath discharged this obligation, and ob-
 “ tained remission for us, — and if the obtaining this
 “ remission was by the shedding of his blood, which is
 “ called the *price* of our redemption, — it follows, that
 “ the wrath of God was appeased by the death of Christ,
 “ and that God was pleased to accept this vicarious
 “ suffering of his Son, *in the stead* of the punishment
 “ that was due to the sinner, in his own person; which
 “ is the express and proper notion of an expiatory sacri-
 “ fice. For so we read, that, under the law, the sinner
 “ laying his hand upon the sacrifice, to signify the trans-
 “ ferring upon *it*, the punishment due unto himself, the
 “ sacrifice was slain, and it was accepted *for him*, to
 “ make an atonement for him.”

“ He has vindicated the honour of God’s laws, by
 “ taking upon himself, the punishment of their sins, who
 “ repent, and embrace the Gospel. He condescended
 “ to be made sin for us, who himself knew no sin, that
 “ we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
 “ To be made sin for us:—that is, to be made a sacri-
 “ fice for our sins, that we through that expiation, might
 “ become subjects capable of the mercy of God. He
 “ took upon him our nature, and was clothed in our

might be wished, he obviously refers the hope of salvation, to a lively faith in the blood of Christ, and points to his merits, as the only medium through which man can hope for the remission of his sins, or the acceptance of his person in the sight of God.

“ flesh, partly indeed that he might preach the will of
 “ God to mankind in a nearer and more condescending
 “ conversation with them, but *principally*, that he, who
 “ in the form of God could not suffer, might become
 “ capable of suffering, by being made in the likeness of
 “ man. He lived a most innocent and spotless life, that
 “ he might indeed set us an example, that we should
 “ follow his steps; but *chiefly*, that because, as it was
 “ required that the typical sacrifices under the law
 “ should be whole and without blemish, so it was neces-
 “ sary, that he, who was to be the *real* expiatory sacri-
 “ fice for the sins of others, should have none that
 “ needed expiation, of his own. *For such an high priest*
 “ *became us, who is, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate*
 “ *from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.* (Heb.
 “ vii. 26.) He suffered a shameful and ignominious
 “ death upon the cross, that he might give us an ex-
 “ ample of patience, and readiness to suffer: *but the*
 “ *principal design of it was, that he might put away sin*
 “ *by the sacrifice of himself, and obtain eternal redemption*
 “ *for us, through faith in his blood.*”

The Scriptural doctrine of the influence of the Holy Ghost, and of the absolute necessity of this influence, to conversion and sanctification, has been sometimes supposed to be much under-rated by this class of Divines: and it will not be denied, that at a later period, the desire of clearing this doctrine from exaggerations, led some of them into an opposite extreme, and gave rise to a modified and diluted statement, which almost reduced it to a power of rightly exercising the natural faculties, in the pursuit of truth, and the practice of virtue.

Though Doctor Clarke constantly asserts this power, and earnestly contends for the use of it, he clearly maintains, not only the early miraculous effect of the influence and operation of the Holy Ghost, in the establishment and propagation of Christianity, but the perpetual necessity of this influence, (not indeed in its miraculous, but in its moral force,) to conversion, sanctification, and salvation. • “When the miraculous effect ceased, (he says,) yet still the receiving of the Holy Ghost, was as con-

“ stant and necessary as ever: because, ex-
“ cept a man be born of the spirit as well as
“ of water, he cannot enter into the Kingdom
“ of Heaven. It is now true, as well as it
“ was then, that if any man have not the
“ spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and
“ that the spirit of Christ dwelleth in us,
“ except we be reprobates.”

If I were not afraid of exhausting your patience, by lengthened quotations, I might give you some specimens of Dr. Clarke's view of this doctrine, which I think would induce you to acquit him here, at least, of any deviation from the principles of Scripture, and of the Church.*

* The following extract is subjoined for the farther satisfaction of the reader who may think the above quotation too general or ambiguous. It must be remembered that we are vindicating here, Doctor Clarke's doctrine upon the *reality* and *necessity* of the influence and aid of the Holy Spirit, not his disquisitions or conjectures upon the medium or mode of its operation; one of those inscrutable mysteries, to which reason ever has been, and ever will be, unequal.

“ The way to know whether any person *has* this
“ spirit dwelling in him or no, is by *the fruits of the*

I shall not attempt any observation upon the general style of these discourses, farther

“ *spirit*; for the tree is known by its fruit. Now the
 “ fruits of the spirit are either *temporary*, or *perpetual*.
 “ *Temporary*, such as are the *miraculous* gifts of speak-
 “ ing with tongues, prophesying, healing diseases, and
 “ the like: — or *perpetual*, such as are the moral dis-
 “ positions and habits of the mind, *worked in us by the*
 “ *spirit of God, improved in us by his continual assistance,*
 “ and acceptable to him in the performance: namely,
 “ goodness, righteousness, and truth, as Saint Paul
 “ reckons them up, (Ephes. v. 9.), — and more largely,
 “ (Galat. v. 22.), — the fruit of the spirit is love, joy,
 “ peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 “ meekness, temperance. These are the *permanent*
 “ fruits of the spirit, necessary to be found at all times
 “ in every baptised person; otherwise his baptism is
 “ nothing else but merely washing away the filth of the
 “ flesh: so that, being born of water only, and not of
 “ the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
 “ In whomsoever these *moral* fruits of the spirit are
 “ found, the other *miraculous* and extraordinary ones
 “ are now unnecessary: and even *these*, at the first
 “ preaching of the Gospel, when they were the most
 “ *needful of all, yet were they useless and unprofitable to*
 “ *those very persons in whom they most abounded, if the*
 “ *moral fruits of the spirit were not found in conjunction*
 “ *with them. By the habits of piety and true holiness,*
 “ *men may now shew themselves as full of the Holy Ghost*
 “ *as ever, without any miraculous gifts, with the greatest*
 “ *abundance of which, they were still void of the Holy*

than that their close and argumentative form renders them more suitable to the closet than to the pulpit, and better adapted for the conveyance of instruction to the mind, than for the excitement of devotional affections. The preacher seems to wave

“ Ghost, even then, if not endued with piety and true
 “ holiness. For, miraculous gifts were but the signs of
 “ the Holy Spirit, working by them, not in, and upon
 “ them. And therefore, such gifts were useful, rather
 “ to others, than themselves; to convince beholders,
 “ rather than to sanctify the persons. Tongues, saith
 “ Saint Paul, are for a sign, not to them that believe,
 “ but to them that believe not. But moral virtues are
 “ evidences of the spirit’s dwelling in men, and sanc-
 “ tifying their hearts and lives, which to themselves
 “ is the end and the effect of that belief, the producing
 “ but the first beginnings whereof, in others, is all that
 “ is intended by miraculous gifts. These extraordinary
 “ gifts, therefore, were only operations of the spirit,
 “ while righteousness and holiness are properly called
 “ its fruits. *Fruits of the spirit*, because worked, not
 “ as the others, extrinsically, necessarily, and without
 “ the concurrence of the persons themselves, but worked
 “ in the mind, and with the free choice and will of the
 “ person, by the approbation, assistance, and help of
 “ the spirit of God, concurring with him, not barely
 “ operating by him.”

Note.—The term “moral virtues” used above, refers obviously to the catalogue of Christian graces before enumerated, from Saint Paul.

his character of an ambassador, in assuming the office of an advocate, and appears to be rather enforcing a system, than delivering a divine communication or command. From this exclusive application to the understanding, these sermons derive a certain coldness of character, which would very much lessen their usefulness in ignorant or promiscuous congregations, or in cases where it was necessary, as it almost always is, to touch a hard heart, or awaken a dormant conscience.

You will say that I have offered a very qualified vindication; and that even if Doctor Clarke's philosophical habits, might be pleaded in apology for his own aberrations from the simplicity of Scripture doctrine, they do not make those aberrations less real, or less dangerous in their influence and example. In this I entirely concur; and I am far from desiring to see this writer resume his place, as a popular guide in divinity. Yet I cannot but lament the indiscriminate censure, which seems likely to deprive the orthodox theologian, of the

aid of his piercing and powerful intellect, and still farther to extend that prejudice against reasoning in religion, which has furnished infidelity with a pretence for representing religion and reason, as necessarily hostile to each other.

LETTER XXXV.

*GENERAL RETROSPECT. BOYLE'S LECTURES.—BISHOP
BRADFORD.*

PROMINENT DOCTRINES OF INFIDELITY AT THIS PERIOD. —
MATERIALISM. — INFLUENCE OF THIS, ON THE DIVINITY
UNDER REVIEW. — SERMONS OF ARCHDEACON GURDON.
— VERSATILITY OF THE INFIDEL WARFARE. — ANECDOTE
OF VOLTAIRE. — SUCCESSIVE TOPICS OF INFIDELITY. —
VARIOUS SUBJECTS OF THESE LECTURES. — EVIDENCE OF
REVELATION IN ALL ITS BRANCHES. — CHRISTIAN DOC-
TRINES FULLY STATED. — INSTANCE IN THE SERMONS OF
BISHOP BRADFORD. — MANY OTHERS TO THE SAME PUR-
POSE, MIGHT BE PRODUCED.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE already observed, that the promi-
nent doctrines of infidelity, at the period
under ~~our~~ consideration, were, materialism,
and necessity : and I noticed in my last, the
double view under which the latter doctrine
had been combated, whether as a philoso-
phical tenet, or a deduction from some

parts of the scheme of revelation. No such association, however, could be pleaded in favour of materialism ; which seems to have been the favourite ground, on which the atheist framed his metaphysical objections, and where he could be refuted by metaphysical argument alone. Though I shall not here contend for the prudence of introducing disquisitions of this kind, into the pulpit, (and indeed, I confess, that, except under the regulations of these lectures, they are absolutely inadmissible,) I cannot help referring you to one series of the sermons in this collection, (those of Archdeacon Gurdon,) which appear to me quite satisfactory upon the subject: and I am the rather induced to specify these sermons at present, because the pernicious doctrine refuted in them, has been revived within the last few years, with all the plausibility of physical science, and all the ornament of poetical genius; and the danger appears to be rather increased than diminished, by the attempts which have been made, (by persons well intentioned, perhaps, but imprudent,) to abstract the question altogether from reli-

gion, and to represent this doctrine as independent of, yet still compatible with, the truth of revelation.

I have noticed the versatility with which the enemies of religion varied their modes of attack, and sometimes drew, even from their defeat, new weapons of warfare against her. For nearly half a century, these attacks were continued almost without intermission; and there seems to have existed a combination not less real, — nor animated, (in some cases,) with a spirit less virulent, — than that of the conspiracy of the continental atheists, so clearly proved by Barruel, from the evidence of their own letters.

It is remarkable, that Voltaire's determination to dedicate his life to the overthrow of Christianity, was formed after his visit to England, and his intimacy with the English philosophers; a name with which he compliments the adepts of this school, and which he is not so ready to apply to those who better deserved it.

Though the *positive* evidence of an infidel combination in England, is not so decisive*, there is strong presumptive proof, in the variety of operations, all directed, with unvarying harmony and unrelaxing zeal, to the uniform object of subverting revelation. The disproof, or the exaltation of natural religion, — the depression, or the deification of reason, — the establishment of ridicule as a test of truth, — the attempt to confute the Mosaic history, by the objection of chronological discrepancies, or of later improvements in astronomical science, — the pretended deficiencies in the scheme of Christian morals, (when in truth it was the very perfection of this scheme, that rendered it obnoxious to most of these writers, —)

* It is asserted by a contemporary writer, that the opponents of Christianity, in England, at this period, formed themselves into clubs, in which the *plan* of every operation was concerted, and sometimes the ~~whole~~ performance compounded of matter,* to which every member contributed his share. Do not the present times exhibit a similar association, and prove at least the unity of principle and spirit, that actuates the enemies of the Gospel?

the endeavour to invalidate the genuineness of the Scriptures, and the still more insidious endeavour to prove, that even their acknowledged genuineness would be insufficient to establish facts inconsistent with experience, and incapable of proof by human testimony, — the identification of Christianity with its corruptions, and the appeal from its authenticated records, to the practice of its degenerate or hypocritical professors, — all these, and innumerable other expedients, have been resorted to in the course of this warfare ; and the very order in which they have been employed, as they appeared necessary to the support of infidelity, driven from post to post in the controversy, clearly evinces to the reflecting mind, a harmony of operation, quite inconsistent with the notion of detached and desultory opposition.

From all these circumstances I would deduce the origin of that style of preaching, in which some of our Divines at this period, appear to have sunk the theologian, in the philosopher ; and, in their anxiety to defend

the general truth of revelation, to have been less explicit in the proof of some of its peculiar doctrines. I do not dispute, that in some instances, and at a later period, omissions of this kind were carried still farther; and the sanctions of Scripture were almost forgotten, in enforcing morality upon principles of reason. How much of this effect, was connected with preceding controversies, and how much, with the apathy, that towards the close of this period, had confessedly crept into the Church, I shall not enquire: nor shall I attempt to bespeak your indulgence, for any of those “Apes of Epictetus,” as Bishop Horsley called them, who substituted the husks of heathen ethics, in place of the bread of life.

But before we take leave of these lectures, I must observe, that they are not limited to *philosophical* defences of revelation. Against the various opponents to be refuted, different arguments are necessarily employed; and the truth of the Gospel is proved from *external*, as well as internal, evidence. The

Divine authority and mission of the blessed Jesus, are demonstrated to the Jews out of their own prophecies; which, though it has been sneeringly called an argument *ad hominem*, is a fair and universal medium of proof, to all who compare the authenticated date of these predictions, with the several periods of their accomplishment. The genuineness of the Books of the New Testament is proved, by such evidence, as we do not possess for that of any other ancient writings. The fidelity of the Evangelical historians, is demonstrated by the double argument, that the whole system which it was their aim to enforce, is inimical to falsehood of every description, and that, if it had been their object to forge a revelation, they would not have framed one, which precluded themselves from temporal ease and emolument, which bound them to a life of labour and suffering, and promised them (what in many instances they actually endured,) a death of ignominy and torture.

I must here interrupt our review, for a moment, to observe upon the unfairness of

those enemies of the Gospel, who would stain the glory of the first Christian martyrs, by comparing their readiness to suffer for the faith, with the frenzy of Indian fanatics, or even with the zeal which afterwards led Christians to expose themselves unnecessarily to danger and death, when martyrdom had become a fashion. The difference in the case of the apostles, (and one which infidelity carefully omits to notice,) lies in the *origination* of the practice. The records of pagan heroism, anterior to the times of Christianity, convey to us no names of voluntary martyrs to piety. The pride of patriotism and of integrity, did indeed produce some instances of self-devotion; but these originated in human motives alone, and looked only to human praise, for their recompense: and in fact, the only case of ancient martyrdom, that can be fairly cited as parallel with that of the apostles, is that of the prophet Daniel, and the three ~~Jews~~, in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. The extraordinary coincidence of motive and practice, in the faithful servants of God, under each of these Divine dispensations, marks at once

the identity of the cause for which they suffered, and of the principle by which they were sustained.

Another point, and a very important one, discussed by some of the preachers of these lectures, is the *preparatory* character of the Jewish revelation; and the gradual development of the grand scheme of redemption, from the promise in Paradise, to its consummation on Mount Calvary. In fact, the adaptation of the whole Jewish economy, to authenticate a system which was to supersede it, is a circumstance so remarkable, and so strikingly different from the general practice, and inconsistent with the objects, of human legislation, that, as we cannot suppose any community thus voluntarily anticipating its own dissolution; so we cannot conceive the exercise of a power or prescience, less than divine, in constructing a system, containing within itself the portraiture and promise of a new dispensation, and in the fullness of time, and in defiance of every obstacle that national prejudice and jealousy could oppose, exhibiting the per-

fect original of this picture, and the minutest completion of this promise.

But the demonstration of Christianity, in many of these lectures, is not confined to its more general proof, or historical evidence. The *characters* ascribed in Scripture, to our Lord, as well as his divine mission, are proved from the facts of his history; the promise of remission of sin, through his blood only, is stated as the primary proposition to be established; and this doctrine, with those of the Trinity and the incarnation, the corruption of man, and the necessity of Divine grace for his renewal, are expressly maintained as the fundamentals of the Christian scheme.

I have not room to enlarge much farther, upon this part of our subject; but I cannot leave it, without noticing particularly, the sermons of Bishop Bradford, on “*the credibility of the Christian Revelation, from its intrinsic evidence:*” — not so much, because they confirm the above observations, more than many others of these lectures, as be-

cause they are the only writings of this pious and excellent Divine, which I happen to have at hand; and I would not omit the mention of his name, amongst the worthies of our Church.

In the first of these discourses, upon the text (John vi. 45.) “and they shall be all taught of God,” &c. &c. he explains the nature of that divine teaching, which he considers as a necessary preparative for the reception of the Gospel. There are several ways, (says he,) in which men may be said to be taught of God, in order to their receiving any farther revelation from him. They are taught of God, (in order to this end,) by the wonders of creation and of providence, — by the suggestions and dictates of conscience, — by extraordinary persons raised up by providence, and qualified to teach others, — and by the motions and influences of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men.

‘The qualities’ (he adds,) which are requisite to the reception of this divine teach-

ing, are, seriousness* of spirit, humility of mind, and purity of heart: and he goes on to illustrate in their order, the advantages of these several dispositions, and to describe the *preparatory* tempers which it is man's duty to cultivate, and which, being his duty, the Divine grace has placed within his power. "Therefore," (he infers very justly in the close,) "if any person who is
 "not furnished with the qualifications
 "above-mentioned, and for want of them
 "hath not been taught of God, shall yet
 "take upon him to deny the truth of the
 "Christian religion, he is to be neglected,
 "as one that is no competent judge in the
 "dispute."

From this introduction, the preacher proceeds to a general survey of the Christian scheme; in which he begins with the apostacy of man, and the great object of our blessed Lord's mission, the salvation of

* By seriousness, (it appears) is here meant a steady and considerate temper; careful in examining, and candid in admitting, the evidences of divine truth.

sinner. On the first of these topics, he is very diffuse in the description of man's natural capacities, both for intellectual and moral improvement; and expressly asserts his "freedom or liberty of choosing, and "his power, consequently, of acting according to such choice, without which, liberty "would have been given to him in vain."

"Yet shall we call this," (he says) "a "perfection, or an imperfection?" — His reply to this question, chiefly refers to the liberty enjoyed by our first parents in Paradise, and is therefore unconnected with our subject; but his subsequent observations upon the nature of sin, and its consequences to mankind, whether generally or individually, prove that he did not consider this faculty as wholly lost, though miserably depraved by the fall.

"The very first act of sin," (he observes, speaking of the case of every individual sinner,) "is a mighty disorder, as being an "abuse of that liberty with which he was "entrusted, and a contradiction to the

“ natural inclination with which he was
“ endued by his Maker. By this means,
“ the tone of his spirit is, as it were, imme-
“ diately relaxed, — the will corrupted, —
“ the natural propension of the soul towards
“ God and goodness weakened, and a con-
“ trary disposition perhaps introduced, —
“ the appetites and passions, which were
“ made to be ruled, having once broke
“ loose from the government they were
“ placed under, are apt thenceforward to
“ become impetuous and arbitrary, — the
“ understanding, having been once misled
“ or over-ruled, is for the future less able
“ to discern clearly, or to judge impar-
“ tially : — in a word, innocence and inte-
“ grity are lost.”

“ Every repeated act, strengthens the
“ evil habit, and increases the disorder
“ which is thus unhappily begun in all the
“ faculties.”

“ If the man continues to be a sinner
“ only in a lower degree, he will find a
“ perpetual struggling and conflict within

“ his breast ; his understanding, and rea-
 “ son, and conscience, directing and leading
 “ him one way, whilst his appetites and
 “ passions hurry him the other ; the law
 “ in his members, warring against the law
 “ of his mind, and for the most part bring-
 “ ing him into captivity ; he neither ap-
 “ proving what he does, nor finding him-
 “ self at all disposed to do what he approves.
 “ Wretched man that he is ! And if he be
 “ grown a hardened sinner, he is still the
 “ more wretched, because more incurable,
 “ though at the same time less sensible of
 “ his evil condition.

“ And all this while, he is exceedingly
 “ estranged and alienated from God, the
 “ author of his being, and the fountain of
 “ all good ; — he is ashamed and afraid to
 “ approach him, on whom he entirely de-
 “ pends, or to address himself to him
 “ whose aid he stands in need of every
 “ moment ; — he is conscious of having
 “ given him offence, and therefore justly
 “ apprehends his displeasure.

“ This is lively represented by Moses, in
“ the case of our first parents, who, imme-
“ diately upon their disobeying the com-
“ mand of God, hid themselves from his
“ face, being ashamed and afraid to see or
“ hear of him, whom just before they had
“ conversed with, to their great satisfaction
“ and comfort. And every sinner, that is
“ not past feeling, may find something
“ very like this, within himself.”

The nature of the salvation, offered by the Gospel, through the sacrifice and mediation of Christ, is stated, in the third of these discourses, to consist — “ in his delivering men
“ from the just displeasure of their Maker,
“ and all the terrible effects of it, together
“ with a complete restoration to the divine
“ favour, and giving them a title to all
“ those blessings, which are proper for hu-
“ man nature, when accepted of God ; — in
“ setting them free from all that disorder
“ and irregularity, which had been intro-
“ duced into the several faculties of their
“ souls, together with the dissatisfaction

“ and uneasiness of mind which necessarily
 “ followed : ” — “ In a word, salvation con-
 “ sists, (he adds,) in reconciling God to
 “ men, and men to God, and in all the
 “ blessed fruits of such a reconciliation : ”
 — “ and, as this is the salvation which the
 “ Gospel offereth to every particular man
 “ to whom it is preached, so it assures us
 “ that all those who shall *embrace* the offer
 “ shall be thus saved ; though by the
 “ craft of their subtle enemy, and their
 “ own weakness and folly, they had once
 “ fallen from God, and the state in which
 “ he had placed them, and been in immi-
 “ nent danger of utter perdition.”

The reasonableness of this mediatorial
 scheme, he then proceeds to demonstrate ;
 and the expiatory nature of our Saviour's
 sacrifice, he asserts in the same discourse, in
 terms the most explicit : and, as if deter-
 mined not to shrink even from those parts
 of the system, to which the pride of philo-
 sophy was most hostile, he closes the fourth
 lecture, with a vindication of the Trinitarian
 doctrine.

The reconciliation of sinners to God through Christ, — the removal of their natural fears and disabilities, — the motives and assistances to evangelical obedience, in the offer of salvation, the example of our Saviour's life, and the promise of the Holy Spirit, — are detailed in the remaining lectures. Any extracts from these, would too much lengthen my letter, and are unnecessary to the point I proposed; viz. to prove, that neither his own philosophy, nor his fear of the philosophy of his hearers, modified the opinions or the statements of Bishop Bradford, upon the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.

In my next, I shall return to our more general retrospect, as illustrative of the last period on which I propose here to offer any observations. The awful history of the close of the last century, and the subsequent renovation of the religious spirit in the world, which exhibit so stupendous a view of the power of Divine Providence, in eliciting good from evil, are subjects of too much magnitude and importance, to be

compressed within the limits of a few pages ; and, if you wish for a farther prosecution of the enquiry, must be reserved for a future correspondence.

Adieu ! my dear friend !

LETTER XXXVI.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

POPULAR CHARGES AGAINST THE CHURCH, IRRELEVANT TO THE PRESENT SUBJECT. — CONDUCT OF AN IMPARTIAL ENQUIRER, WITH RESPECT TO THESE CHARGES. — PROBABLE DECISION OF SUCH AN ENQUIRER. — A RULE OF JUDGMENT SUGGESTED. — APPLICATION OF THIS RULE, TO THE COMPOSITION OF HISTORY, AND INQUIRY HOW FAR IT HAS BEEN OBSERVED BY SOME POPULAR HISTORIANS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SHALL not attempt to disprove, or to palliate, (though I cannot but think them too indiscriminately applied,) the charges of a relaxation of discipline and zeal, which have been brought against the national Church, at this period of her history. Happily, it does not belong to our object, to enter farther into the discussion, than as it relates to the influence of these circumstances (to whatever degree they may have existed,) on the style and subjects of our pulpit divinity.

I may, however, observe, that certain precautions and limitations are necessary in the investigation of these charges ; an attention to which, would probably produce a censure less severe and undistinguishing, and perhaps, in more cases than are commonly supposed, a complete and triumphant acquittal.

Instances of partial, or of individual negligence, a fair inquirer will not urge, as a ground of general reproach : and while he traces in the history of the times, and perhaps in the constitution of the Church *,

* The large endowments enjoyed by the Church, and the unequal division of its revenues, and, above all, the independence of clerical income upon the rate of clerical exertion, have been assigned, with some reason, perhaps, and more plausibility, as causes of occasional supineness in the clergy. Yet it would be fair to take into account the advantages resulting from this constitution ; and to recollect, that the evil complained of is, in fact, inseparable from a competence of temporal provision, under any circumstances, where professional exertion is supposed to be stimulated by any human motive. It is an evil resulting from the corruption of our nature, and which nothing but personal piety will remove : and the esta-

the causes of an occasional declension, he will still feel the value of an Establishment, which has proved, in its general conse-

blishment of a contingent remuneration, whether dependent on the government or the people, might introduce the still worse evils, of servility or faction, hypocrisy or extravagance. Though the labourer in the spiritual vineyard, is confessedly worthy of his hire, it is not *for* his hire that he should labour; and it is, perhaps, expecting too much from human nature, to expect that avarice will always resist the temptation of progressive or contingent acquisition.

Into the very complicated and difficult subject, of the nature of Church property, and the administration of Church patronage, the writer of these pages pretends not to enter. It has already exercised some of the ablest pens, and occupied some of the best informed minds, in the community: and every succeeding enquiry has but contributed to prove, that its inconveniences, obvious and palpable as they are, result rather from the abuse of the system, than from the system itself: and that, although partaking necessarily of the imperfection inseparable from every human institution, its principle is equitable and wise, and equally calculated to prevent the minister from sinking into a dependence on the caprice of his congregation, and to preserve that connection between the church and the government, which is necessary to secure some important advantages of a national religious establishment. The Church, under her present hierarchical constitution, is the natural ally of legitimate

quences, a great national blessing ; which has resisted political anarchy, without deserting the principles of liberty ; — and which, equally removed from spiritual tyranny and licentiousness, has restrained the rage of innovation, without violating the rights of conscience. He will acknowledge the excellence of a church, which has built her faith upon the rock of Scripture, and illustrated that faith, with instructions to assist, but not to over-rule, the judgment of her children.* He will farther confess, that the Church, even at the period to which this censure refers, had many burning and shin-

and hereditary monarchy ; and it seems essential to the preservation of this alliance, that the disposal of her high and confidential offices, should be vested in the person of the sovereign, whom she acknowledges as her supreme temporal head. But it is also necessary, — awfully and imperiously necessary, — that this great privilege should be wisely and conscientiously exercised ; and that the advancement of the interests of religion, should be the sole consideration in the appointment of those ministers, who are invested with the high trust and deep responsibility, of providing “ faithful men” for the farther instruction of the people.

See Article 6.

ing lights, not less exemplary in practice, than eminent in knowledge ; and in the monuments of their pastoral and literary labours, he will find that professional dignities or emoluments, did not relax their zeal in professional duties. He will separate what is Scriptural, and fundamental, and permanent, from what is occasional and temporary, in their writings, as well as from what is personal and characteristic ; and he will examine, by a careful reference to the prejudices and controversies of their day, the ground of any apparent aberrations, with which the judgment, or the prejudice of his own times, may charge them.

For real aberrations from the standard of Scripture doctrine, he will, indeed, make no farther allowance, than a consciousness of his own fallibility may suggest ; yet, if he considers the indefatigable diligence, with which many of these writers appear to have searched the Scriptures, he will perhaps hesitate, even on such points, to urge his own judgment dogmatically against theirs, till he shall have studied as deeply,

and prayed as earnestly, and laboured as zealously, as they have done. If his religious principles or pursuits, lead him to a particular investigation of their errors, he will undertake this investigation with diffidence, and conduct it with charity : and in the act of obviating opinions which he conceives to be erroneous, he will be careful not to trace those opinions, to any principle which he would not himself acknowledge, if he could suppose himself placed in the situation, and holding the sentiments, of those from whom he differs.

This principle of justice naturally leads us to a recollection of the very different treatment, which Churchmen collectively, have received at all times, from the pen of the secular historian ; and especially, since the fashion of what is called philosophical history, has rendered it necessary to trace, or to assume, some latent metaphysical cause, as the foundation of the facts to be related, or the peculiarities of character to be described. You will not suppose me to object to the fair exercise of a philosophical

spirit, in any branch of literature ; nor to dispute the peculiar advantage of its application to the study of history ; a science which has been very elegantly and justly defined, to be “ philosophy teaching by examples.” But I would object to that partial philosophy, which, instead of framing its theory from facts, labours to adapt facts to a theory ; or by unwarranted and arbitrary inferences from facts not unfaithfully related, endeavours to establish a favourite system, or to infuse a characteristic prejudice.

The indications of this partiality in some of our most popular historians, cannot have escaped your notice ; and would hardly require any observation here, if the period of history directly connected with our subject, did not afford an exemplification of the remark, and exhibit, as the invidious distinction of a class, a spirit which is common to the species, and conquerable only through the influence of that faith, which it seems to have been the object of these philosophers, to extinguish.

Allow me here to extend this digression a little, and by way of example, to notice one charge against the Church, and the ground upon which I think this charge might be refuted, or shown to be at *least* as applicable to the secular, as to the ecclesiastical character: I mean, the charge of a vindictive and interested spirit.

We have seen the Church, emerging from the depression of Cromwell's usurpation, and participating in the universal revulsion, which seems to have marked a new era in English manners and opinions. Smarting under the recollection of recent injuries and deprivations, and empowered by the re-establishment of her legal rights, to reclaim her alienated property, it would not, perhaps, be matter of surprise, if this power had been sometimes strictly or precipitately exercised. How far the Establishment is deserving of the charges which have been urged against her, on this head, I shall not enquire; but I cannot omit to notice a circumstance, which appears to have rendered these charges more prominent, by exhibit-

ing the hardship of the subsequent deprivations, chiefly, if not entirely, in clerical cases, and thus exposing the clerical character to an unfounded or gratuitous imputation of peculiar vindictiveness or rapacity.

The subversion of the English monarchy, upon the murder of Charles the First, was not attended with any general confiscation of property ; nor marked by those changes of the relative position of the different orders in society, which distinguished a later and more atrocious revolution in another country. The lords and gentlemen who had adhered to the royal cause, yielded upon the death of their sovereign, to a power which they could no longer resist ; and generally availed themselves of the liberality, or the prudence, of Cromwell, to resume the quiet possession of their estates, (a possession which, indeed, had hardly been interrupted,) and to return to their private avocations, under a sort of tacit compact of submission to the new government. The democratic spirit which had grown during the civil wars, was subdued or appeased by

the powerful genius of the Protector: the national dignity was sustained, and the national pride was flattered, by the strength of his foreign administration, while the turbulence of disappointment and discontent was controuled by the firmness of his domestic policy. For discontent, indeed, there was little ground, (unless in the depression of the Church,) so far as the great body of the people was concerned. If we except the arbitrary impositions upon the royalists, after their last struggle in 1655, private property appears to have been generally inviolate. Commerce was protected; the forms of a free constitution were employed to cover the strength of a military despotism; and as great a regard to justice was retained, in the administration of the government, as the consciousness of usurpation, and the jealousy necessarily attendant upon it, would permit.

So desirous was Cromwell, to secure the services, and to avoid offending the principles, of the loyal and virtuous part of the

nation, whom necessity had forced to submit to his authority, that he never appears to have required any express test or promise of allegiance, except on the admission to a seat in Parliament. Trusting to the vigilance of his government, or to the integrity of those with whom he had to deal, he advanced the conscientious royalist, and republican, to places of confidence and importance, and endeavoured to engage the talents and the virtues of both, in the defence of the country, and the administration of the laws.

But in the ecclesiastical constitution, a violent change had been effected, some years before the death of the unhappy Charles. The Episcopal order had been abolished, and the Episcopalian clergy dispossessed, to make way for the establishment of the Presbyterian discipline. The revenues of the former, had been confiscated for the use of the state, and those of the latter, transferred, with their benefices, to the ministers who succeeded them in their

several charges. Throughout the subsequent convulsions, and during the usurpation of Cromwell, the clergy alone, seem to have suffered, as a body, the severities of personal and pecuniary oppression. Their property alienated, and their functions suppressed, or at least executed with difficulty and peril, they appear to have been marked as the sole victims of a revolution, which left all the other orders of the state, in the full enjoyment of their possessions, while it gratified them with an apparent enlargement of their political liberties. I say apparent; for no real enlargement of liberty took place, either during the government of the parliament, or the protectorate of Cromwell. Despotism had only changed its form, and at the latter period, modified its proceedings, under the influence of a wise ambition: — but it was despotism still; and it was an honour reserved for a second revolution, to establish liberty upon its true basis, and to restore the laws to that supremacy, which had been successively invaded and interrupted, under the regal, the popular, and the military government.

As the confiscation or transfer of property, in the rebellion, had been confined to ecclesiastical cases, or, I should rather say, had been exercised collectively, against the clerical order alone, the resumption of their rights and temporalities at the Restoration, though no more than might have been expected to follow the legal re-establishment of the Church, has naturally stood out in the page of history, as a prominent instance of compulsory restitution ; and the clergy have been charged with a peculiar alacrity in resuming their alienated possessions, while it seems to have been forgotten, that no other class of men in the community, had been provoked to the exhibition of such a spirit, by the experience of similar deprivations. Yet the restitution of the preferments of which they had been violently dispossessed, to those of the sequestered clergy who survived the Restoration, was no more than a restitution of legal rights, which the interruption of legal authority had suspended ; and the first act of resumption by the Church, was as fair an exercise of these rights, as would have been the resumption

of any other property, if other property had been equally invaded.

If the subsequent controversy in the Church, exhibited in some instances, a spirit which the best friends of the Church must lament, this warrants no general charge upon a profession, which furnished, at the very same period, the most eminent examples, of liberality on the one hand, and of conscientious firmness on the other; — a firmness, which we must admire in its principle, however we may regret its exercise upon some points too trivial to afford a reasonable subject of division.

I little expected when I began this letter, to have been drawn back to the Restoration; but even if the digression has not brought us forward in our inquiry, I trust it will not be without effect, in its application to our general principle.

LETTER XXXVII.

GENERAL RETROSPECT CONCLUDED.

VARIOUS ASSOCIATIONS OF DOCTRINE. — DOCTRINE OF NON-RESISTANCE, INCULCATED IN THE HOMILIES. — EXPLODED OR MODIFIED, AT THE REVOLUTION. — INFLUENCE OF THIS, UPON THEOLOGY. — FRIENDS OF THE REVOLUTION. — NON-JURORS. — JACOBITE PARTY. — PROBABLE CAUSE OF THE GRADUAL DISUSE OF THE HOMILIES AS A TEXT BOOK. — NON-CONFORMISTS BECOME A DISTINCT SOCIETY. — GRADUAL AND GENERAL PROGRESS OF TOLERATION. — PARTIAL SECULARITY OF THE CHURCH, ACKNOWLEDGED. — GENERAL REMARKS. — THE INQUIRY CONCLUDED.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is a singular anomaly in the history of human opinions, that the doctrines of Calvinism, associated with its discipline, should have been the distinction of the republican party in England, or at least generally combined with republican principles; and that the same doctrines, under a different association, should have been held, by some strenuous advocates of non-resistance and passive obedience. Yet, to those who discover the doctrines of Calvin, in the Homi-

lies of our Church, this will not appear inconsistent. In the same volume, the principles of loyalty, and submission to established government, are inculcated, in terms so unqualified, as to preclude, if literally understood, opposition to authority under any form, or any attempt to resist, or to remove, the powers "appointed of God." I have already observed, however, that the Homilies cannot fairly be cited as auxiliaries to Calvinism, though subsequent associations have created an apparent connection between them. As these associations existed in their full strength, at the period of the Revolution, and the accession of the House of Hanover, we may discover in them, another clue to the origin of the change in the style of our national theology.

The statement of the doctrine of human corruption, in the Homilies, adopted rather in its dogmatical, than in its controversial bearing, was received and exaggerated, by two very different classes of men, upon different grounds, and in a different spirit.

By the former, the doctrine was deduced from Scripture, and proved by experience, though expressed in hyperboles, and accompanied with inferences, which Scripture did not seem so clearly to warrant. By the latter, the same doctrine, adopted as a philosophical principle, was urged, to annihilate the distinctions of morality, to countenance the practice of vice, and to sanction the free indulgence of evil passions, supposed to be inveterate and unconquerable. By both, the claims of established government were asserted, and unreserved obedience to the sovereign authority, enforced. The infidel, indeed, carried his principle farthest, and extended the obligation even to matters of religion; while the Christian deduced the prerogative of the sovereign, from the divine appointment, and held, with the apostle, that in matters pertaining to salvation, "we ought to obey God, rather than man."

While the doctrine of human depravity, in its connection with predestination, and with the Calvinistic principles of church government, was adopted by the enemies

of monarchy, it seems to have been the object of our loyal and moderate divines, to separate it from these adventitious associations, and to distinguish the substantial truth, from exaggerations or inferences by which it was distorted or obscured. By taking the doctrine, under the disguise of philosophy, into an alliance with despotism and profligacy, Hobbes awakened a new conflict, and engaged the friends of liberty, as well as of virtue, in the endeavour to ascertain its true scriptural extent and foundation.

The weariness of political anarchy, and the fear of its recurrence, when the death of Cromwell had relaxed the strong reins of the executive government, combined with a general preference of monarchy, and a personal affection for the memory and the family of Charles the First, to incline the people to the Restoration; and the enthusiasm with which the returning monarch was welcomed to the throne of his ancestors, precluded all thought of conditions or securities. The result was, unhappily, an

extension of despotism, such as England had not felt, even under the most tyrannical of the Tudors, and of licentiousness, such as had seldom, disgraced a Christian, and never, a Protestant, country.

The resentment of oppression, the growing principles of freedom, (now better understood and more prudently applied,) and finally, the apprehensions for the integrity, and even the existence, of the national religion, produced at last the legal expulsion of the Stuarts, and the establishment of a new dynasty ; — for, as such, the Revolution must in fact be considered, though it restrained the direct entail of the crown, to the issue of the Protestant daughters of James, and founded upon its relation to the exiled family, the introduction of the House of Hanover, into the succession ; thus acknowledging the principle of hereditary monarchy, even in the act of its violation, and clearly distinguishing between the aberrations of caprice, and the alterations of necessity.

As the security of religion by the Revolution, had been identified with the re-establishment of liberty, the maxims of civil freedom and political right, began to be associated with the national theology. The doctrine of passive obedience, which had been held conscientiously, by the Episcopal clergy, in the reign of Charles the First, and slavishly, by some of those under his successor, began to be very generally modified; and upon the actual covenant between William the Third and the nation, which rendered the rights and obligations reciprocal, and consequently by implication, conditional, was founded the abstract notion of an original compact, the principle of all government, and the basis of all civil society. To this system, the clergy who were friendly to the Revolution, inclined; and in their discussion of the doctrine under our notice, (which from this period, began to be treated rather incidentally, than directly,) they seem to have had in view, the republicanism of Calvin, the servility of Hobbes, and the conscientious, but exces-

sive, loyalty of some of their own contemporaries.

There was, at this period, a strong and a very respectable party in the Church, who could not adopt, in their full extent, the free principles of government introduced at the Revolution. Accustomed to hereditary monarchy, and impressed with the notion of divine right, they considered the new doctrine of an original compact, rather as a bold and ingenious theory, than as a demonstrative truth; and some who reasoned upon the subject, could perceive, even at this period, the licentious excesses to which this doctrine might be carried. But the majority of these divines, felt themselves bound by a stronger tie than the calculations of reason, or even the general impressions of religion. They dared not infringe an oath, which they had voluntarily taken, and which they could not conceive to be abrogated, by a breach of duty on the part of their sovereign. His abdication they held to be involuntary, and his rights

unalienable ; and though their principles of civil obedience, secured their peaceable submission to the new government, and their attachment to the Protestant religion naturally recommended it to their preference, this prior obligation precluded any active co-operation in its measures, or any express acknowledgment of its legitimacy.

There was also a strong political party in the nation, who, upon other views and principles, adhered to the interests of the exiled family ; and either pleaded the rights and necessary security of the Church, in opposition to the newly established toleration, or, by reviving the doctrine of non-resistance, tacitly impeached the Revolution, and exposed the existing government to the charge of usurpation and rebellion.

Principles like these, objectionable or doubtful at all times, were peculiarly dangerous at the period to which we refer ; when the legal settlement of the constitution was still recent, and the friends and emissaries of the House of Stuart, were ac-

tive in exciting the scruples, and the passions of the people, to overthrow the fair fabric of national freedom and charity, which had been reared with so much zeal and labour.

From these circumstances it probably arose, that the authority of the Homilies as a text book, was gradually superseded by later expositions; and as the admission of this authority, was not a matter of obligation in the Church, (these discourses having been compiled for a temporary purpose, and the use of them required only in default of preaching,) the exercise of their liberty upon this point, by the clergy, cannot fairly be charged as a breach of their engagements; even by those who may consider it as 'an' error' in judgment.

It should also be recollected, that, at this period, the principles which had been before considered only as the distinction of a party in the Church, were, by the separation of the non-conformists from the Establishment, brought more particularly un-

der the notice of Churchmen, as subjects of explanation or of self-defence; and that such discussions were, from henceforward, considered rather as a vindication of the Establishment against dissenters, than as a division of the Church against herself.

I must farther observe, in favour of the divines whose character we are now considering, that whatever may be thought of their judgment upon doctrinal points, their principles and practice were eminently tolerant. The Romanist, the rigid High Churchman, and the Calvinist, had been equally zealous in the enforcement of their respective systems, and equally intolerant towards those who dissented from them. The Episcopalian, and the Puritan, had been mutually taught charity in the school of persecution, and had learned, from their own sufferings for the faith, to compassionate the scruples, and respect the fortitude, of their brethren. Retaliation, indeed, had been provoked and had been exercised on both sides, with little scruple or mercy; but the evil at last worked its own remedy,

and the persecutor felt, in the injuries he sustained, the punishment of those which he had been instrumental in inflicting. If a natural pride or partiality, restrained the express acknowledgment of this feeling, it was not the less evident, in the general change of sentiment, and progressive developement of the principles of toleration, in the writings of Puritans as well as of Churchmen; and I have remarked elsewhere, that to the Presbyterian heads of the universities, introduced under the Parliamentary government, we owe the education of that class of divines, who, under a more regular administration, vindicated at once the purity of the Church, the supremacy of the Bible, and the right of private judgment, in points of individual belief or opinion.

This right, (asserted indeed at the Reformation, though not subsequently allowed by the Reformers themselves, inestimable as were their services to the cause of religion,) had not hitherto been maintained as a general principle, though it had been

practically taught by experience. The honour of its firm and final triumph, upon the broad ground of reason and Scripture, was reserved for the writers of the Revolution ; and was largely participated by those eminent Churchmen, whose philosophy had widened their charity, without contracting their faith, and who, while they refused to desert an establishment whose general doctrine they approved, on account of requisitions which they held to be indifferent, laboured indefatigably, to reconcile their more scrupulous brethren, on the one hand, and to propitiate their less complying rulers, on the other.

I will, however, confess, that I do not love to contemplate our divines, as secular or political characters ; and I fear, that at this period, the mixture of politics with religion, contributed too often to secularize the tone of our divinity. But I would rather distinguish these instances, as unhappy exceptions, than refer to them as proofs of any general dereliction of Church principles, or pastoral habits, in the clergy.

You will say, perhaps, that such a reference to local and personal history, as I have here suggested, is not within the reach of every reader ; and if it were, that it would not excuse, in the writers under our review, any deviations from the standard of Scripture doctrine, however fairly it might account for them. This I readily acknowledge ; and where such deviations actually appear, I trust that I should be one of the last to defend them. But I must protest against the sweeping censure, that either condemns this whole class of divines unexamined, or examines them, without a reference to principles and rules of judgment, confessedly necessary in every other branch of criticism.

Yet, while I would endeavour to vindicate these divines, from indiscriminate censure, or to rescue them, from unmerited neglect, I would not plead for the general revival of a similar style of preaching ; nor wish to substitute their remains, for those more energetic and awakening addresses, which are necessary to arouse the careless sinner, to a

sense of his guilt, and a perception of his danger. The earnest expostulation, — the frequent repetition, — the direct interrogatory, — the authoritative appeal, — constitute, in fact, the only style of teaching, that is always intelligible or interesting to the bulk of the people; and the plain and familiar exposition of Scripture, is more suited to the pulpit, than the critical or polemical essay. While I would recommend, therefore, a careful perusal of these writers, or at least a liberal selection of them, as a rational and useful exercise for the Christian, and especially for the clerical student, I would not propose an imitation of their style, nor an acquiescence in their opinions, farther than as his own taste shall approve, and his own judgment assent to them.

I would, however, suggest to you, here, that a conscientious reader and inquirer, who takes the Bible for his supreme guide, and, in humble dependence on the aid of divine grace, endeavours to learn from it the way of salvation, — if he considers it as no breach of this dependence, to consult his

own reason, in the examination of Scripture, (and by reason alone, can he ascertain where inquiry should end, and absolute submission begin, —) may safely avail himself of the reason of others, more exercised by use, more improved by study, and perhaps as much enlightened by divine grace, as his own. The implicit adoption of any human system, or reliance on any human authority, is indeed carefully to be avoided ; but you will agree with me, my dear friend, that such a reliance is not less to be apprehended, in the preference of a single preacher or commentator, or of the divinity of a particular school, than in a more free and impartial examination.

If we had time, or documents, to trace the various innovations, and even occasional improvements, in religious practice and opinion, which have so rapidly succeeded each other, in the course of the two last centuries, we should find many of them deriving their origin, from circumstances of local influence or impression, though confidently, and in many cases, conscientiously,

attributed by their authors to the divine suggestion. It seems, indeed, to have been the plan of Providence, in the religious and moral, as well as in the natural, world, to work by instrumental and secondary causes ; and to have reserved the stupendous exhibition of direct and supernatural agency, for the evidence and establishment of that covenant of mercy, which God has been pleased to make with his rational and intelligent creatures.

And if such be the divine plan, it is obviously the prudence (may we not say the duty ?) of the religious inquirer, carefully to cultivate his reason, and to avail himself of the reason of others, — to employ both, as instruments confided to him by his Creator, to assist him in attaining a knowledge of his duty, and a fuller capacity for the performance of it, — and to receive the instruction communicated through his understanding, with candour and readiness, though, from his knowledge of the weakness of the instrument, he dares not trust for a moment to its operation, without the aid of that in-

vigorating Spirit, on whom alone he depends for knowledge, and counsel, and strength.

The course of our inquiry, now brings us to the rise of a new controversy in the Church ; which, in its influence upon our pulpit divinity, has not been less important than those that preceded it. I mean, the introduction of Methodism. This is, however, a subject so copious, that I dare not engage in it at the close of so long a correspondence ; and shall content myself with observing, in general, that I fear not even here, to apply my principle, to the defence of a great portion of our divinity ; though I acknowledge that a spirit of secularity, a compliance with fashion, or a fear of the imputation of disaffection or enthusiasm, have contributed, in some cases, to reduce its strength, to modify its strictness, or to corrupt its Scriptural simplicity.

I did intend, at the beginning of our correspondence on this subject, to have selected some later preachers, for examination ; and

not to have carried you back to the early history, and internal controversies, of our Church. I found such a retrospect, however, indispensable to the foundation of my argument ; and I hope it will not be without its use, in the determination of your judgment, on the merits of our more recent, as well as of our earlier divines.—You have probably had quite enough of the discussion ; but you will find me still at your command, if you shall be inclined to pursue it at any future period.

Yours, very faithfully.

LETTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUDING LETTER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I THOUGHT you would willingly dispense with the farther prosecution of an inquiry, which has extended so much beyond my expectation, and sometimes (I fear) beyond your patience. I cannot, however, take leave of the subject, without reminding you of the practical instruction, which it has been my object to draw from it, throughout the whole of our correspondence.

In laying our foundation, in a view of the general advantages of religion, and of its necessity to the temporal happiness and improvement of communities, as well as to the eternal salvation of individuals, I have, of course, confined myself to its influence upon the conscience as a rule of action,

and upon the heart, as a motive to gratitude. This influence is inseparable from the sincere profession of Christianity, under *any* of its forms; and is the result of a full and cordial admission of the authority and evidence of the Gospel. It may consist with differences of opinion, or discrepancies of practice, in religion; but it is the essential and indispensable character, by which the spirit of religion is distinguished from the spirit of unbelief. The *infidel* has no rule of action but his interest, and no principle of conscience but his inclination. He finds himself, in deed, often compelled to sacrifice both, to the interests and inclinations of others. And, in a country governed by the institutions, and partially pervaded by the principle, of a Christian morality, the force of example, of education, of general opinion, and of decency, may awaken within him a sort of spurious conscience, or of sentimental virtue, — which will operate in proportion to the strength of the impressions upon which it is founded, and lead him to consider his moral obligations, (if he acknowledge any such,) rather with a refer-

ence to the society with which these impressions have connected him, than with a reference to the God who made, and who will finally judge him. This distinction is clearly evinced, in the standard of social, or of honourable, morality, admitted by infidelity itself, and commonly received amongst the careless or sceptical professors of Christianity; — a standard, so widely different from the morality of the Gospel, that it is utterly impossible to bring them to any assimilation or consistency.

By the Christian, another rule of action is proposed, and another principle of obligation is acknowledged. Whatever be the differences of interpretation or apprehension, in which some doctrines of the Gospel are received, all who believe in its divine origin and inspiration, refer to its precepts, as the standard of morality, and to its sanctions, as the sole authority on which the moral duties can be effectually enforced. Whether the capacity for these duties be regarded as inherent, or imparted, — whether the performance of them be considered as

the result, or the condition, of justification, —the judgment with respect to their nature, is the same, as well as with respect to their necessity ; and there is an universal and unalterable agreement, as to the source from whence they are derived, and the great principle upon which they depend.

But, whatever system of Christian belief may be in its tendency, more or less favourable to morality, no system, however practical in its object, or precise in its definitions of Christian duty, will be operative upon a heart that is not Christian ; and whatever difference of opinion may exist, between those who participate in the *spirit* of Christianity, the influence of this spirit will invariably produce, in exact proportion to its degree, the fruits of righteousness, and peace, and patience, and charity, and candour.

• Whether there be a natural tendency to produce this spirit, in one system of doctrines, more than in another, is a question

of which I shall not attempt the solution. The best proof of this tendency, which the adherents of the several systems can give, is the exhibition of its actual influence. This is a proof, which will at once assuage our jealousies, remove our misunderstandings, and moderate, if it cannot reconcile, our differences ;—a proof, which will at once distinguish the Christian advocate (whatever be his doctrine,) from the polemical sophist, and will take from the infidel, one of his strongest weapons of opposition to the Gospel.

Wherever the true doctrine of Christianity is to be found, we may be sure that it is *not*, where the spirit of enmity is prevalent. “He that hateth his brother, is in “darkness, and walketh in darkness, and “knoweth not whither he goeth.” The very test of Christian vitality*, is — the spirit of brotherly love : — love,

* First Epistle of St. John, chap. 3., ver. 14.

“not in word, nor in tongue,” says the venerable apostle, “but in deed and in truth ;” — love, which is the only attribute of the Godhead, in which the conscious sinner can look for peace, as it is the only one in which he can *aspire* to imitation ; — love, which another apostle has so comprehensively described, as the fulfilling of the law, — including within it all that is just in practice, all that is candid in opinion, all that is gentle, and benevolent, and merciful, in temper and affections.

In my remarks upon your censure of our divines, I have been led into a farther examination of doctrines, and a fuller disclosure of my own sentiments upon some disputed points, than may appear quite consistent with the original object of our correspondence. But you will recollect, that it has not been my purpose, to plead for indecision of principle in religion, nor for any suspension of opinion, upon controverted points of doctrine, to which we have given a fair and careful examination. On the con-

trary, I am convinced that such a suspension is neither desirable nor possible. To some conclusion, the understanding must come, (where it is exercised at all,) in the examination of every question presented to it: and although there will naturally be diffidence and hesitation, in proportion to the difficulty of the subject, and the variations of sentiment upon it, which we observe in persons whom we deem more competent than ourselves, this diffidence, though it may lead us to examine our opinions, and to be less tenacious in maintaining them, will not prevent the formation of a negative or affirmative judgment, upon the abstract proposition before us. It will, however, teach us modesty and candour, and an allowance for the judgment of others, generally in proportion to the care with which we have exercised our own.

In our retrospect of the controversies, which gradually formed the style of our pulpit divinity, to the character it had assumed at the period to which your objections refer, you cannot have failed to trace

a resemblance to similar controversies in our own day, and to perceive in them, the origin of much of the jealousy, with which the preachers of that period and school are regarded. I shall not here enter farther into the subject, than to remind you of what I have elsewhere observed, that from these recent controversies, has arisen a distinction in the style of public preaching, which appears again to have divided the Church against herself; and in the adoption of which, each of the parties, anxious to avoid the supposed error of the other, may have been said to preach but half the Gospel.

It may indeed be replied, that as faith was generally urged by the one party, as the root and principle of obedience; and obedience was described by the other, as the result and evidence of faith, — their consistency in the Christian scheme was preserved by both; only the one or the other was rendered more or less prominent, according to the temper or habits of the preacher: and

this I believe to be the true account of the nature of the distinction, in many instances. Yet, it must be confessed, that it has sometimes assumed a more decisive character ; and that if the preachers of the former class, have appeared to undervalue the importance of faith, in their enforcement of the moral duties, those of the latter, in their anxiety to magnify divine grace, have not at all times sufficiently insisted upon the conditional nature of the Gospel promises. The necessity of a holy and virtuous life, as the fruit, and the only certain evidence, of that faith, to which the promise of salvation is annexed, has indeed been always supposed: but it has been pressed with so little urgency, and so taken, in a manner, for granted, as the inseparable consequence of the believer's spiritual convictions, that little practical instruction was drawn from such discourses; and the hearers were sometimes in danger, of being led to mistake the fervours of the imagination, for the impulses of the Spirit, or the terrors of superstition, for the suggestions of conscience.

Experience, however, appears to have convinced many very pious and respectable ministers, who seem to have fallen originally into this style of preaching, through a deep sense of the value of the atonement, and a fear of under-rating that great and only cause of a sinner's justification, — of the necessity of clearly and invariably combining, with their display of the Divine grace, an enforcement of the obligation to personal holiness, and of giving to good works, (to moral duties performed upon Christian principles,) a more prominent place in their discourses. It has shown also, I would hope, the danger and unsoundness, as well as the uncharitableness, of an opinion, which was too often expressed in an earlier stage of the controversy, that a preacher's earnestness in pressing the duties of morality, not only as an evidence of faith, but as a condition of final acceptance and reward, (a condition, however, be it remembered, utterly destitute of all meritorious efficacy,) indicated either an erroneous apprehension, or a culpable abandonment, of the essential doctrines of the Gospel.

To us, my friend, who are called to the knowledge of this blessed Gospel, under circumstances of peculiar favour and advantage; — to us, who have our lot in the fair ground of freedom, and civilization, and social and literary improvement; — to us, who have free access to the oracles of truth, and, in the history of past errors and dissensions, may find the warning of experience, while we learn to escape its penalties; — to us, who, amidst the turbulence of a stormy horizon, are permitted to behold the Sun of Righteousness again throwing wide his beams over the world, — to see the Angel of the everlasting Gospel, rising triumphant from a struggle with the powers of darkness, which seemed to have threatened, and certainly proposed, little less than its utter extinction, — to hear the trumpet of salvation, again vocal in the land where atheism and blasphemy had silenced its breathings, — and to send from the shores of our own island, the glad tidings of a Saviour, to the farthest ends of the earth; — to us, who have been made partakers of such blessings, witnesses of such events,

and *trustees* of such a dispensation, — what remains, but to fall down in humble and grateful adoration, before Him who sitteth on the Throne, and to unite with the angelic host, in proclaiming “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men?”

NOTE

Referring to Page 118. VOL. II.

THE insertion of the Lambeth Articles, here, may be satisfactory to some readers who have them not at hand, and may wish to compare them with those of the Church of England.

1. " God from all eternity hath predestinated certain persons unto life, and hath reprobated certain persons unto death."

2. " The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life, is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of any thing that is in the persons predestinated; but the alone will of God's good pleasure."

3. " The predestinate are a predetermined and certain number, which can neither be lessened nor increased."

4. " Such as are not predestinated to salvation, shall inevitably be condemned on account of their sins."

5. " The true, lively, and justifying faith, and the Spirit of God justifying, is not extinguished, doth not utterly fail, doth not vanish away, in the elect, either finally or totally."

6. "A true believer, that is, one who is endued
"with justifying faith, is certified by the full assurance
"of faith, that his sins are forgiven, and that he shall
"be everlastingly saved by Christ."

7. "Saving grace is not allowed, is not imparted, is
"not granted to all men, by which they may be saved
"if they will."

8. "No man is able to come to Christ, unless it be
"given him, and unless the Father draw him: and all
"men *are not* drawn by the Father, that they may come
"to his Son."

9. "It is not in the will or power of every man, to be
"saved."

